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THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

IN

EARLY CHRISTIAN LATIN POETRY

BY

REV. ANDREW B. HEIDER, S. M.

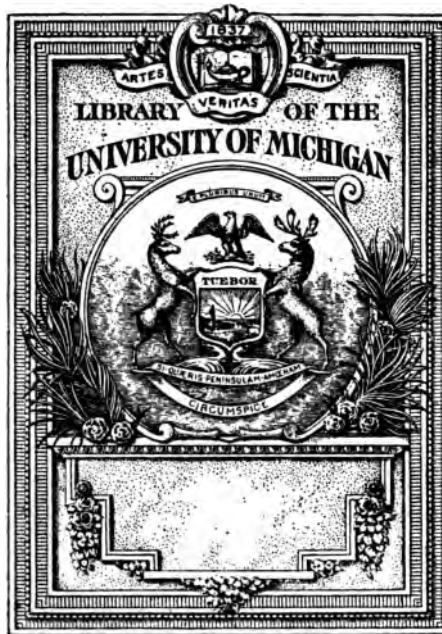
(Brothers of Mary)

A DISSERTATION

*Submitted to the Faculty of Letters of the Catholic University
of America, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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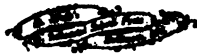


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PREFACE

The following pages are the result of an attempt to gather the earliest Latin poetical works, or parts of poetical works treating directly or indirectly of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The collection has been made as complete as the sources at hand have permitted, and is presented with brief commentaries telling of authors and contexts and of the relation of the selections to one another.

The order followed is chronological, but not so strictly as to exclude the collation of productions on similar subjects furnished by poets who were not contemporary.

In the choice of texts, the critical editions of the Vienna Corpus of Latin Ecclesiastical Writers and of the *Analecta Hymnica* have been preferred. Where these collections failed, the material has been drawn from Migne's Latin Patrology and the selections in the *Summa Aurea* of Bourassé. The various readings of texts as reported at length in the critical editions just mentioned above have been left out of consideration, save in a few exceptional instances, as not coming within the scope of this dissertation. The question of authorship or origin has received due attention, a brief notice on it being given with each text cited; and the style and manner of authors is pointed out in so far as the excerpts illustrate it. To enter into general criticism of authors and epochs would have been to depart too far from the plan of this study.

However piecemeal this collection of excerpts may appear, it yet points out the way to later development of Marian poetry, and contains the foundation for much of what the later poets have written. This is quite natural. What constitutes the essential greatness of the Mother of God, what first arrests the attention of him who contemplates her, is her union with the Word Incarnate. Her privilege of perpetual virginity is a necessary consequence of this union. In presence of these prerogatives the poets as well as the orators pause to express admiration and astonishment. The very earliest of the ecclesiastical

writers treated of them with reverent admiration and joy, and at the period with which this study begins there is already a certain sum of fixed phraseology referring to these subjects from which even the most original genius will not depart. Other topics did not attract so much attention. Thus the prophecy in Genesis: "I will place enmity between thee and the woman.....", so interesting to us at the present day owing chiefly to its connection with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, has been practically overlooked by the poets, with one notable exception; her graces and the various incidents in her life have received but scant notice; but her virginal maternity is a theme that none of the early poets miss, just as it inspired some of the most beautiful passages in the Fathers. One might almost say that a sort of poetic tradition was established in this way, so that during a considerable period the succeeding poets did little more than vary and amplify the expressions of their predecessors. The remarkable development of Marian poetry during the later middle ages was along different lines. It sprang chiefly from piety and sentiment, and hence dealt at great length with the beauty of her virtues, her joys and sorrows, the power of her intercession, the figures and types of her mentioned in the Scriptures; and all the beautiful things of nature were called in to do service in honoring and invoking her. All this was in conformity with the natural process of development which obtains also in regard to other beliefs and the exterior forms of worship.

When once the way has been sufficiently prepared, the vast store of poetical tributes to the Mother of God during the middle ages will no doubt be gathered and published with suitable commentary. The undertaking will not be a slight one. The compilers of the *Analecta Hymnica* have done much preliminary work. The scope of their publication, however, includes only hymns and therefore omits such works as the *Laudes S. Mariae* of Venantius Fortunatus, the epic of Bl. Baptista Mantuanus and the *De Partu Virginis* by Sannazarius. Besides, there is a large quantity of Greek poetry in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary which is not inferior in worth to the Latin, and which if placed in juxtaposition with it affords some interesting points of comparison. Such a publication will be an indispensable supplement to the *Summa Aurea*.

The existing works bearing on the subject of the present dissertation are not numerous. Besides the collections already mentioned, the works of Livius and Lehner render excellent service, as also the History of Christian Latin Poetry by Manitius and the general Histories of Latin Literature by Schanz and Ebert, by the analysis and appreciation of works that they furnish. The hymns that are treated can be found in the volumes of Daniel, Mone and Wackernagel, which have, however, been practically superseded by the *Analecta Hymnica*. All the works just mentioned are indicated in the general bibliography appended, with others that have been found useful. Works to which only a single or unimportant reference has been made will be noted at the respective places.

The main object of the dissertation has been to rescue from obscurity the poetical tributes to Our Lady found in early Christian Latin literature, in order to show how those authors represented her to themselves, what was their belief and what were their sentiments in regard to her. Such a study may be serviceable to Christian apologetics by supplying increased strength to the arguments in favor of Catholic belief and practice in the early ages, and it may also furnish the student of the historical side of Mariology with ready material to enable him to pursue his investigations with more convenience. The dissertation covers only the earliest period of Christian Latin poetry.

Thanks are due, and are here sincerely expressed, to all those whose suggestions and kind interest in the work have been a constant encouragement; in particular to Dr. John B. O'Connor, head of the Latin Department at the Catholic University, whose advice and assistance have been highly appreciated; likewise to the Rev. Franciscan and Marist Fathers for the free access to their libraries which they have so cheerfully granted; and finally to the library staffs for their ever ready and generous service.

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CHAPTER I

The first mention of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Christian Latin poetry is in the *Carmen adversus Marcionem*.¹ This is one of the earliest productions—if not the earliest—met with in that department of literature. Nothing is known with certainty concerning the author and place of composition of this lengthy work.² Its date, after repeated and close investigations, has been set down as the second half of the third century of the Christian era.³ It treats of the origin of sin and heresy, the unity of the Old and New Testaments, the agreement of the doctrine of the Roman Church with the teachings of Christ and the Apostles, and finally combats in particular the errors of Marcion. The contents are dogmatic, and the poem has neither literary nor esthetic value.⁴

In the second book, the connection between the Old and the New Testament is shown, and here the rôle of the Blessed Virgin Mary is touched upon (ll. 142-143; 146-152; 178-79):⁵

142 Et quia terribilis puteo demersus iniquo
Vir cecidit, suasit virgo subducta dracone;

* * * * *

¹ This is the title generally accepted. Manitius (op. cit., p. 148) has: *adversus Marclonitas*.

² It consists of 1302 verses divided into 5 books.

³ H. Waitz (*Das pseudotertull. Gedicht adversus Marcionem*, Darmstadt, 1900) (Dissertation) after a thorough analysis of the poem, reaches this conclusion (p. 12) chiefly from Church-historical (p. 12 sqq.) and theological (p. 18 sqq.) considerations. Schanz (op. cit., p. 202-3) is in accord with this view. Monceaux (*Hist. littér. de l'Afrique chrét.* Paris, Leroux, 1905) places the work between 325-350, A. D. (p. 501 sqq.) For literature on the subject, see Schanz, p. 203-4.

⁴ Ebert, op. cit., p. 312, note 1. Schanz, l. cit.

⁵ P. L. 2, 1066. See text and translation of a lengthy excerpt in Livius, op. cit., p. 440 sqq. The first line is there numbered 145. In line 148 of the selection here given, the reading *nato* (P. L.) has been changed to *nata* (Livius).

- 146 Ex eadem massa simili ratione refecta,
 Jam renovata, redit flos carnis, et hospita pacis,
 Virgine desponsa caro, non ex semine nata,
 Artifici conjuncta suo, sine debito mortis.
- 150 Angelus haec mandata Patris per sidera defert
 Lucida, ut angelica credantur nuntia fama,
 Virginis ut Virgo, carnis caro debita solvat.

* * * * *

- 178 Sponsa virum necuit, genuit sed Sponsa Leonem:
 Virgo viro nocuit, sed Vir de Virgine vicit.

And because one direful man
 Down-sunk in pit iniquitous did fall,
 By dragon-vanquished virgin's suasion led;

* * * * *

Out of the self-same mass re-made, returns
 Renewed now—the flower of flesh, and host
 Of peace—a flesh from espoused Virgin born,
 Not of man's seed, conjoined to its own
 Artificer, without the debt of death.

These mandates of the Father through bright stars
 An angel carries down, that angel-fame
 The tidings may accredit; telling how
 A virgin's debts a Virgin, flesh's flesh
 Should pay.

* * * * *

A spouse her man did slay; a Spouse
 Did bear a Lion. Hurtful to her man
 A virgin proved: a Man from Virgin born
 Proved victor.⁶

The language here used to tell Mary's part in the work of the regeneration of the human race—her name is not mentioned, but the reference to her is unmistakable—is not much different from that employed by St. Irenaeus. In his work *Contra Haereses* we read: “uti virginis Evae virgo Maria fieret advocata”,⁷ and here (l. 152): “Virginis ut Virgo.....debita

⁶ Livius, op. cit., p. 441-443, quoted from Ante-Nicene Christian Library, vol. XVIII, pp. 337-9. Rem.: Translations not otherwise assigned are by the writer.

⁷ Lib. V, c. 19 (P. G., 7, 1175). See the explanation of the term *advocata*, as used by St. Irenaeus, in Neubert, op. cit., p. 263 sq.

solvat."⁸ Similarly, Tertullian says: "Quod illa credendo deliquit, haec credendo delevit."⁹ The controversies over the perpetual virginity of Mary, in the second century,¹⁰ had rendered these ideas quite familiar to all who had read something of the ecclesiastical literature of the period. The antithetical form of ll. 152, 178 and 179 renders them impressive. Such constructions are reminiscences of the antitheses indulged in by the controversialists of the previous age, who, following the lead of St. Irenaeus, conceived the work of the Redemption to be the counterpart of the events that brought about the ruin of the race: a man and a woman being instrumental in both, as also an angel, a tree, etc.¹¹

In l. 147, Our Savior is called *flos carnis*, a picturesque appellation, which recalls the prophecy of Isaias (XI, 1): "a flower shall rise up out of his root" (of Jesse). This title (*flos*) is found again in the *Explanatio nominum Domini* attributed to Orientius,¹² but with a different interpretation:

Flos, quia confessos et martyres ipse coronat.

The poet Venantius Fortunatus applies it differently again, when he sings in his hymn in honor of the Passion (*Pange lingua gloriosi lauream certaminis*):

Nulla silva talem profert fronde, flore, germine.

In the hymn, *Jesu, dulcis memoria*, it recurs with a new meaning in the line: *Jesu, flos Matris Virginis*.

The poet Sedulius adopted l. 152, amplifying it into:

Virginis antiquæ facinus nova virgo piaret.

⁸ Compare, also, l. 178-179 with St. Irenaeus *Contra Haeres.* l. III, c. 22 (P. G., 7, 959). This and other selections from St. Irenaeus and Tertullian may be seen in Newman's Letter to Dr. Pusey, p. 34 sq.

⁹ *De carne Christi*, 6. 17 (P. L. 2, 782).

¹⁰ Cf. Neubert, *op. cit.*, p. 57 sqq. and 159 sqq.

¹¹ Cf. the texts from St. Irenaeus and Tertullian above referred to. Waitz (*op. cit.*, p. 25 sq.) has shown in detail the application and development, by the author of the poem, of the doctrine of St. Irenaeus on this subject.

¹² Probably the bishop of Auch who in 439 headed an embassy of the Frankish king Theodoric I to the Roman generals Aetius and Litorius. (Manitius, p. 193; Art. by Fortescue in *Cath. Encycl.*, vol. XI, p. 305b). A critical edition of his poetical works is published in the *Corp. Vindob.*, vol. 16, p. 194 sqq., by Robinson Ellis.

CHAPTER II.

To the early part of the fourth century belongs the next poem in which there is reference to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the *Laudes Domini*.¹³ The author is not known; but from his work we gather the information that he lived in the land of the Haedui (ll. 9-10), heard of a miracle that took place there (28-31) in favor of persons whom he knew (9-10), and the fruit of his enthusiasm over the event is this poem, in which he praises Christ, the author of the miracle (34-35) as the Creator and Redeemer of the world (36-142). He concludes with a mention of the emperor Constantine, for whom he desires victory and happiness (143-146), and expresses the wish that his sons may resemble their father (148). Thus, a comparative certainty as to the date of composition is obtained: the mention of the sons of Constantine places it—as Schanz argues, following Brandes¹⁴—before 326, in which year the emperor persecuted the members of his family, particularly his son Crispus.¹⁵

In speaking of Christ's coming into the world, as its Redeemer, the poet makes mention of the Virgin-Mother (ll. 97-98, 105-108):

97 *Te genitor nostra, paterentur ut ora tueri,*
Induit humana facie membrisque caducis.

¹³ Edited in P. L. 19, 379 sqq. (with notes, by Arevalus, as appendix to the works of Juvenecus) and 61, 1091 sqq. (without notes). For critical notice, see Schanz, p. 187; Manitius, p. 42 sqq. It is mentioned also in Teuffel, op. cit., 403, 7; Ebert, I, p. 118, note 3.

¹⁴ Ueber das fruehchristliche Gedicht *Laudes Domini*, Braunschweig, 1887—a work which it has not been possible to consult. The notices of Manitius and Schanz are, however, based upon it, and therefore equally reliable.

¹⁵ Cf. Guggenberger, *General Hist. of the Christian Era*, vol. I, p. 40.

- 105 Ne tamen insignem res nulla ostenderet ortum,¹⁶
 Virgine conciperis, non sufficit esse pudicam.
 Nec quae nupta queat Domino conjungere fratrem;¹⁷
 Ut procul ex utero contagio turpis abesset.¹⁸

The poet is addressing Christ: "The Father gave thee our human countenance and mortal members, that thy face might become visible. * * * But lest no striking sign manifest thy glorious origin, thou art conceived of a virgin; it was not enough that she be a chaste woman; nor one who, bound in wedlock, were able to give a brother to the Lord: that no ignoble stain come near thee even from the womb."

What is perhaps most striking in these lines, is the clear recognition of the virginal maternity of Mary, as a wonder operated by the Savior in proof of His Divinity, and the explanation which is added; namely, that the honor due to Him required that His mother be not merely a virtuous woman, but rather a virgin, and moreover a virgin forever. This is evidently the meaning to be drawn from these somewhat obscure lines (107-108).¹⁹ Since such a strong assertion of Mary's perpetual virginity is not really called for by the context, it may be regarded as an echo of the former controversies on this subject. These were quite prolonged and animated, because the virginal maternity of Mary was looked upon as a proof of the Divine origin of Christ,²⁰ just as the poet expresses it:

Ne tamen insignem res nulla ostenderet ortum,
 Virgine conciperis.....

The context precludes the interpretation which would consider the term *virgine* (l. 106) to signify the Virgin Mary;

¹⁶ Cf. Georg, IV, 544: Post ubi nona suos aurora ostenderit ortus. (Ib. 552).

¹⁷ At line 107 Arevalus remarks (P. L. 19, 383): Hic versus et sequens obscuri sunt, et fortasse corrupti. Innuitur, ut puto, perpetua virginitas Deiparae, et clarum id est si vers. seq. legas *ut procul*. This suggestion has been adopted in the text.

¹⁸ Cf. Ecl. I, 51; Georg. III, 469.

¹⁹ Teuffel (l. cit.) says, concerning the whole poem: "Das im Ausdruck und Anordnung ungelenke und ziemlich verworrene..... Gedicht....."

²⁰ Cf. Neubert, op. cit., p. 75, 85, etc.

the terms *pudica* and *nupta* which follow are taken in a general sense, and therefore the other must be taken so likewise.²¹

This topic—the virginal maternity—recurs regularly in the earlier poets; in fact it is the burden of nearly all the selections that will be quoted from them.

²¹ The term *Virgin* was accepted as the proper title and even the name of Mary long before this time, in the days of Tertullian and even St. Justin. Cf. Neubert, *op. cit.*, p. 90-91; 100; 104-105. When Newman says (*op. cit.*, p. 41), "(St. Jerome) is only adding another virtue to that crown which gained for Mary her Divine Maternity. They (the Fathers) have spoken of faith, joy and obedience. St. Jerome adds, what they had only suggested, virginity."—his meaning is that St. Jerome spoke of Mary's virginity as a personal virtue that she practiced and in which she was to be a model to others; whereas the earlier Fathers and ecclesiastical writers had extolled her virginity as miraculously preserved while she became the Mother of God.

CHAPTER III

The name of Juvencus is undoubtedly one of the most important in early Christian Latin literature. Notwithstanding his fame, however, and the influence of his work,²² nothing is known of his life but the two facts recorded by St. Jerome: that he was a Spanish priest, and flourished in the time of Constantine.²³ Of his poetical works only the four books of the Gospel-History in verse have been preserved.²⁴

What he has written concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary is contained in the first and second of these four books; namely, the account of her part in the life of Christ, especially in His infancy, based on the Gospels of St. Luke and St. Matthew.²⁵

The passages in question are rather lengthy and moreover contain very little that is original with Juvencus; his purpose having been to versify the Gospel text, adhering very closely to the original.²⁶ It will suffice, therefore, to adduce one of them,

²² Cf. Schanz, *op. cit.*, p. 193 (*Fortleben des Juvencus*).

²³ *De vir. illustr. c. 84* (P. L. 23, 691).

²⁴ The title in the MSS. is: *Evangeliorum liber I-III (versibus) Gaii Vettii Aquilini Juvenci (presbyteri)* (Teuffel, 403, 4). The text is published in P. L. 19, 53-346 (reprint of the edition of Arevalus, Rome, 1792), and in the *Corp. Vindob. 24* (critical edition by Huemer.) According to St. Jerome, Juvencus wrote also "*nonnulla eodem metro* (i. e., hexameter verse) *ad sacramentorum ordinem pertinentia*." This work is lost. The versification of Genesis, etc. (P. L. 19, 345 sqq.) is the work of a later Gallic poet, Cyprian (Schanz, *op. cit.*, p. 192, note; Manitius, *op. cit.*, p. 167).

²⁵ A considerable selection, including all but the account of the loss and finding of Jesus in the temple, is found in the *Summa Aurea*, vol. 5, 581-86. For partial translations, see Livius, *op. cit.*, p. 453, (miracle at Cana), and Lehner, *op. cit.*, p. 251 sq. (Annunciation and Visitation, in German hexameter verse).

²⁶ St. Jerome says (l. cit.): "*paene ad verbum transferens*". This makes the work somewhat dry reading. Yet the criticism of Lejay (*Cath. Encycl. art. Juvencus*, vol. VIII, 586a) is too severe, if not disparaging. (Cf. interesting note of Manitius, *op. cit.*, p. 60, 3). For more favorable appreciation, see Schanz, *op. cit.*, p. 191; Ebert, *op. cit.*, I. p. 118; Gams, *Kirchengeschichte von Spanien*, Regensburg, 1874, I. p. 327; Manitius, *op. cit.*, p. 59 sq.

to show the method and manner of the poet in dealing with the subject.

The Annunciation is thus related (I, 52-79):²⁷

- Tunc majora dehinc idem mandata minister
 Detulit ad Mariae dimissus Virginis aures.
 Haec desponsa suo per tempora certa propinquo
 55 Abdita virgineis caste pubescere tectis
 Et servare diem jussis permissa parentum.
 Ad quam tranquillum sermonem nuntius infit:
 "Salve, progenie terras jutura salubri,
 Desine conspectu mentem turbare verendo.
 60 Nam tua concipient cœlesti viscera jussu
 Natum, quem regnare Deus per sæcula cuncta,
 Et propriam credi subolem gaudetque jubetque.
 Hunc ubi sub lucem dederis, sit nomine Jesus."
 Ad quem Virgo dehinc pavido sic inchoat ore:
 65 "Nullos conceptus fieri sine conjugē dicunt;
 Unde igitur subolem mihimet sperabo venire?"
 Nuntius haec contra celeri sermone profatur:
 "Virtus celsa Dei circumvolitabit obumbrans,
 Spiritus et veniet purus, lectissima Virgo,
 70 Ac tibi mox puerum casto sermone jubebit
 Magnificum gigni populis, quem credere sanctum
 Supremique Dei Natum vocitare necesse est.
 Sic cognata tibi, sterilis quæ credita cunctis,
 Zachariæ conjux mortali germine nuper
 75 Aevo defessis hausit miracula membris.
 Sextus adest mensis: parent sic omnia jussis."
 Virgo dehinc: "Domino famulam nunc ecce jubenti,
 Ut tua verba sonant, cernis servire paratam."
 Nuntius abscedens vacuis se condidit auris.

²⁷ Cf. Luke, I, 26-38. The subjoined text is taken from Corp. Vindob. 24 (p. 6-7). The principal variants from this text in P. L. are: l. 53, demissus; l. 67, fatetur; l. 75, auxit (P. L. 19, 70 sqq. ll. 87-114). In P. L. the numbering of the lines includes both prefaces (the 8 lines composing the first preface: Matthæus instituit.....are not from Juvenius, but were added by a later hand, cf. Ebert, op. cit., I, 115, note 2; Manitius, op. cit., p. 57, note 4) here it begins with Bk. I; hence the discrepancy.

"Then (in the sixth month after the vision of Zachary, related just previously) the same envoy was sent down to communicate sublimer decrees to the ears of the Virgin Mary. She, espoused to her tribesman a certain time, lived in retirement, growing up chastely under a maiden roof, awaiting the day (of the marriage) in conformity with the behests of her parents. To her the envoy serenely spoke his message: 'Hail, thou who shalt come to the aid of the world with a Savior-son. Be not troubled in mind, through fear of this vision. For thy womb shall by Divine command conceive a Son, who by the pleasure and decree of God shall have the kingdom of ages, and shall be believed His own Son. When thou shalt have brought him forth, his name shall be Jesus.' To him thereupon the Virgin spoke, with trembling lips: 'No conception occurs without consort, as is said: how, therefore, shall I expect an offspring unto me?' In answer, the envoy made haste to say: 'The power of God Most High, overshadowing, shall hover round thee, and the Pure Spirit shall come, O Virgin of choice unique, and soon with chaste word shall make a Son be begotten in thee, wondrous unto the nations, who shall needs be believed and be proclaimed the Son of the Most High. Thus also thy relative, who was believed barren by all, the wife of Zachary, through mortal seed has lately in her body worn with years increased²⁸ (God's) wonders; this is her sixth month: thus all things accomplish God's behests.' In answer, the Virgin: 'Behold now the handmaid ready to do the bidding of the Lord, as thy words proclaim.' The messenger, departing, vanished in the void of the air."

From the above a fair judgment can be formed of the manner in which the poet follows the Gospel text. He takes few liberties: he paraphrases occasionally and adds a thought of his own; sometimes he omits a verse or two. The verses descriptive of Mary's hidden life (55-56) are his own, as is also the interpretation: *progenie terras jutura salubri* (l. 58) and the *lectissima virgo* (l. 69). The line 79 is imitated from Virgil²⁹

²⁸ P. L. auxit.

²⁹ Cf. Aen. II, 628: *spissis se condidit umbris*; also VII, 619.

and line 64 from Ovid;³⁰ and Arevalus (P. L. note ad l.) considers the *virginis tectis* (l. 55) an adaptation of Martial's *virgin-earum domum* (the habitation of the Vestal virgins).³¹

Immediately after the account of the Annunciation follows (ll. 80-104) that of the Visitation.³² The Nativity is related as briefly as by St. Luke (ll. 155-57) (Luke II, 6-7). The Presentation in the temple is told at greater length (ll. 185-223); and it may be noted, in passing, that whereas St. Luke (II, 33) states that "his father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning him", the poet has Mary alone in mind, saying (l. 208):

Quid tantum Mariæ stupuerunt pectora Matris?

In the narrative of the loss and finding of Jesus in the temple the same peculiarity appears (Cf. ll. 285-301, with Luke, II, 43-52).

The narrative of the marriage-feast at Cana is related in Bk. II, ll. 127-138.³³ The incident is set out of chronological order, and in consequence the poet is forced to add to the text an interpretation of his own. St. John mentions expressly that the changing of water into wine was the "beginning of miracles", whereby Jesus "manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him." (II, 11). The poet had previously recorded a large number of miracles, notably those that occurred after the sermon on the mount (Bk. I, 731 sqq. Cf. Matth. VIII, IX) and therefore had to explain why Jesus seemed to offer a refusal to His mother when asked for this one: (ll. 135-136).

Festinas, genetrix; nondum me *talía* cogit
Ad victus hominum tempus concedere dona.

The last passage in which the mother of Jesus is mentioned is found in Bk. II, ll. 725-32, where the incident is recorded which St. Matthew narrates Ch. XII, 46-50: "Behold, His

³⁰ Cf. Met. I, 386: *pavido inchoat ore*.

³¹ Lib. I, ep. 11.

³² Luke, I, 39-56. The Magnificat is here reproduced in abbreviated form.

³³ See Livius, op. cit., p. 452-53, for text and translation. This miracle is related also by Sedulius (Carm. Pasch. III, 1-11), but without mention of the presence of Mary.

mother and His brethren stood without, wishing to speak with Him....." It does not call for comment. There is no mention of Mary at the foot of the Cross.³⁴

An examination of the passages above referred to shows that the contribution of Juvencus to Marian terminology has been insignificant. He speaks of her as the Virgin Mary (l. 53-54: *majora mandata detulit ad Mariæ Virginis aures*) or, simply, the Virgin (l. 64: *ad quem Virgo sic inchoat ore*; l. 77: *Virgo dehinc [ait]*; l. 155: *illic Virgo solvitur*). After the birth of Jesus she is called Mater (l. 212, 247, etc.), Genetrix (l. 222, 291, 300, etc.), *pia Mater* (l. 295). When recording the answer of Jesus at the marriage-feast at Cana he avoids the word *mulier*, which the metre would have permitted, and uses *genetrix* (II, 135: *Festinas Genetrix.....*)³⁵ Only twice does he use a qualitative epithet in reference to her: *lectissima Virgo*³⁶ (I, 69), and *pia Mater* (I, 295).

On the other hand, the student of Mariology will find in the work of Juvencus sufficient indication of the manner in which the Gospel story of the events in which Mary figured was understood and interpreted in the first half of the fourth century. The devotional element in that interpretation, while not notably conspicuous, was not wanting. It is evident that the poet pictured her to himself just as we do: a modest, retired virgin (I, l. 55: *abditā virgineis tectis*), who has left the disposal of her youthful life to the care of her parents (l. 56: *jussis permissa parentum*); her answer to the angel is characterized by the respect due to so exalted a messenger (l. 64: *pavido inchoat ore*); when praised and felicitated by Elizabeth for the mysteries that have been wrought in her, she feels herself overwhelmed with joy and gratitude, she must needs

³⁴ John, XIX, 25-27.

³⁵ The compiler of the *Theologia Mariana* in the *Summa Aurea* introduces this narrative expressly (vol. V, 586), to prove that to the mind of Juvencus the answer of Our Lord to His Mother: "Woman, what is that to me and thee; my hour has not yet come" (John II, 4) was not intended as a reproach. And in fact the poet seems expressly to have substituted *genetrix* for *mulier* for this purpose; and after citing the answer of Jesus, he goes on to say: "*Mensarum.....vocat lætata ministros Mater.*"

³⁶ Cf. Cantic. V, 10; VI, 8.

give glory to God; her emotion betrays itself in her voice, yet she speaks with calmness and modesty (I, ll. 94-95 sqq.: *trahens animum per gaudia mista pudore, Suppressæ vocis pavitancia dicta volutat.....*). She is a tender mother, for whom her Son is her all; the poet sympathizes with her solicitude when she seeks her lost Child

.....per vicos urbis, perque abdita tecta,
Perque iteris³⁷ stratas, per notos perque propinquos

(I, 289-290), and he has pictured her tenderness in the words he makes her utter when she has found Him: (I, 296-297)

.....lacrimis te quæro profusis,
Anxia cum genitore gemens.

She has a watchful care for the needs of her friends, and is an anticipating and powerful intercessor for them, who feels assured of obtaining what she asks for them, even if she seems to forestall the time determined by her Divine Son in His own good pleasure. (II, 132-133, the incident at Cana).

The lines and phrases quoted for this characterization are introduced for the most part by the poet himself, and therefore may well be taken to represent the idea, the mental image, he had formed of the Mother of God. And since a poet's work is an exponent of the thought and sentiment of his age,³⁸ it may be affirmed without risk of going counter to the truth, that the above is also the idea, the mental image, that all Christians, in the age of Constantine, had formed of her.³⁹

³⁷ Schanz, p. 191: "Durch Einstreuung von altertümlichen Formeln, suchte er seiner Darstellung einen gewissen feierlichen Anstrich zu geben." Teuffel, 403, 5: "Bemerkenswert ist seine Vorliebe fuer Altertümliches (oder Volkstümliches?), wie *ast, olli, plebes, itiner, dum, quistis.....*"

³⁸ Cf. Newman, op. cit., p. 37.

³⁹ The avowed purpose of Lehner's book (*Die Marienverehrung in den ersten Jahrhunderten*) is to discover how Christians in the first centuries represented Mary to themselves, and how her image (*Marienbild*) developed from a narrow but already theologically complete conception into ever broader and more beautiful lines (op. cit., p. 7-8). His theory is not altogether safe, and he is severely taken to task because of it by Liell, op. cit., p. 7 sqq.

CHAPTER IV

The next poetical work that claims attention is the Virgilian cento of the poetess Proba.⁴⁰ It is rather a literary curiosity than a poem, being an attempt to relate the story of the Scriptures in verses and parts of verses borrowed from Virgil.⁴¹ Proba's intention was good: after having written about the civil war between Constantine and the usurper Magnentius with its "armies of one race and fair shields stained with parents' blood.....and cities so oft widowed of so many a citizen....." (ll. 4-7) she wished to employ her pen in celebrating the works of God from the beginning, (l. 12) and in showing that "Virgil sang the gentle gifts of Christ" (l. 23).⁴² Of her success or rather her failure, Schenkl⁴³ has this to say: "If the other cento-poets whose work has come down to us⁴⁴ had comparatively

⁴⁰ She was a convert, and belonged to one of the highest families at Rome: her grandfather and father had both been consuls; and her husband became praefectus Urbis in 351 (this gives a fixed date in her life). Cf. art. by Lejay in *Cath. Encycl.*, vol. XII, p. 440b; Manitius, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

⁴¹ The text may be found in P. L. 19, 803 sqq., and in *Corp. Vindob.* 16, p. 569 sqq. (critical edition by C. Schenkl).

⁴² Cf. T. R. Glover; *Life and Letters in the Fourth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1901) p. 145. Proba manifests a truly Christian disposition in several instances; e. g., ll. 9-12.

Nunc, Deus omnipotens, precor, accipe carmen
Aeternique tui septemplicis ora resolve
Spiritus atque mei resera penetralia cordis,
Arcana ut possim vatis Proba cuncta referre.

Cf. also ll. 22; 29-34; 333-334.

⁴³ *Corp. Vindob.* 16, p. 554 sq.

⁴⁴ In the same volume (16), Schenkl edits three other centos: *Versus ad gratiam Domini*, *De Verbi Incarnatione*, *De Ecclesia*. Eighteen in all are reviewed by him in the *Prooemium*. (Ib. p. 513 sqq.) Cento-writing was of early date. Manitius (*op. cit.*, p. 124, note 5) quotes Tertullian (*de Præscr. Hær.*, c. 39): *Vides hodie ex Virgilio fabulam in totum aliam componi*, etc. Cf. also Comparetti, *Virgil in the Middle Ages* (tr. by Benecke), New York, (Macmillan Co.) 1895, p. 53 sqq.

little success, it is easy to understand that Proba, even if she had been gifted with great poetic talent, could in no wise have produced a praiseworthy poem. For the ancient myths could indeed, in some fashion, be told in Virgilian lines; but to narrate the events of Sacred History in this manner is simply absurd. It is not astonishing therefore that in this (Proba's) composition much is found that is awkward, and so twisted, so puzzling and involved in darkness, that unless the subject is known to you beforehand, it is not possible to get a clear understanding of it (from the poem)." With these ideas in mind, one is prepared for the two selections that follow. The Incarnation is thus treated (ll. 340-345):⁴⁵

- 340 ".....quom femina primum
 Virginis os habitumque gerens—mirabile dictu—
 Nec generis nostri puerum nec sanguinis edit,
 Seraque terrifici cecinerunt omnia vates⁴⁶
 Adventare virum populis terrisque superbum
 345 Semine ab ætherio, qui viribus occupet orbem.
 (Imperium Oceano, famam qui terminet astris.)⁴⁷

"When first the woman wearing a maiden's mien and garment—miraculous to tell,—brought forth a son not of our race or of our blood; and fear-inspiring prophets sang late omens (i. e., omens to be fulfilled in later times), that a hero was to come, from heavenly seed, who should dominate nations and lands, who by his prowess should master the world, and

⁴⁵ The text of this and the following selection is from Corp. Vind. 16, p. 589 sqq. Cf. P. L. 19, 810.

⁴⁶ This line is amended in P. L. as follows:

Sed quia terrifico cecinerunt omine vates

which may be rendered: "but (we understand the mystery) because the prophets sang in terror-striking omen". This, possibly, adds a little light; but it tampers considerably with the line from Virgil, Aen. V, 524, which reads as in the text above. The emendation is not justified by the MS. readings (cf. notes in Schenkl's edition, op. cit., p. 590).

⁴⁷ This line, found in the Cambridge MS. (12th century) and in the editio princeps (Venice, 1492) (cf. Schenkl's notes, op. cit., p. 590) is retained in P. L. (For description of the MS., cf. Schenkl, p. 521.)

who should bound his empire by the ocean, his glory by the stars."⁴⁸

The following lines are intended as a portrayal of the flight into Egypt (ll. 372-76):⁴⁹

372 At mater, gemitu non frustra exterrita tanto,
 Ipsa sinu prae se portans, turbante tumultu,
 Infantem fugiens plena ad praesaepia reddit,⁵⁰
 375 Hic natum angusti subter fastigia tecti
 Nutribat.....⁵¹

"But his mother, not vainly frightened by so great lamentation, herself carrying the child in her arms, while the turmoil goes on, bears him in flight to where full mangers stand. Here she reared her son beneath the slope of a narrow roof."

On these two passages Schenkl (l. cit., p. 555) justly remarks: "The narrative of the birth of Christ, 345 sqq. and the flight of Mary into Egypt, 372 sqq., suffer from too great brevity, and not a little obscurity." In fact we are left under the impression that the Holy Family did not go to Egypt at all, but hid in the stable at Bethlehem. And Ebert is therefore right when he says: "Wholly unintelligible is the account of the flight into Egypt."⁵²

While not all of this cento is as obscure as the passages just quoted, still it is really an altogether unworthy setting for a

⁴⁸ The passage is constructed from Virgil's works as follows: (Cf. Corp. Vindob. l. cit.)

Line 340:	Aen. VIII, 408
341: Aen. I, 315	" I, 439 (VIII, 252, etc.)
342: Ecl. VIII, 45	
343: Aen. V, 524	
344: " VII, 69	Aen. II, 556
345: " VII, 281	" VII, 258
346: " I, 287	

⁴⁹ P. L. 19, 810.

⁵⁰ The reading *tendit*, for *reddit*, adopted in P. L. is an emendation found in a MS. of IX-X cent. (Cod. Palatinus 1753); there, however, the original *reddit* is noted in the margin (cf. Schenkl, notes l. cit.).

⁵¹ See indication of the Virgilian lines in Schenkl's edition, p. 591. Cf. Manitius, op. cit., p. 127, note 2.

⁵² Op. cit., p. 126, note 4.

Scripture narrative;⁵³ for, besides the obscurity and frequent incoherence that results from the use of verses torn from their context, there is the further inconvenience that the reader is disturbed, almost in spite of himself, by the desire to recollect whence such verses or parts of verses have been taken, and, on the other hand, has at times to make effort to avoid the reminiscences, sometimes odd, sometimes painful, that they awaken. One is not surprised therefore to find Proba's cento on the list of apocryphal and unsuitable books condemned by Pope Gelasius in 494.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, it continued to be read extensively and to be used even as a text-book in the schools.⁵⁵

Another cento in which there is reference to the Blessed Virgin Mary is entitled *De Verbi Incarnatione*. It was formerly attributed to Sedulius.⁵⁶

The passage containing the reference in question is as follows (ll. 11-31; 55-60):⁵⁷

- 11 Virgo matura fuit, jam plenis nubilis annis,⁵⁸
Cui genus a proavis ingens nomenque decusque,

⁵³ Cf. Schanz, (op. cit., p. 198): "Der modernen Zeit erscheint dieser Cento als ein absurdes Produkt." Similarly Ebert, (op. cit., 126) and other critics.

⁵⁴ Teuffel, (op. cit., par. 469, 5) calls the decree in question "unechte Dekretale". It is accepted (implicitly) as authentic by J. Murphy, S.J., in the article, Gelasius I, Cath. Enc., Vol. VI, p. 406a; by Schenkl (l. cit., p. 515), Manitius (op. cit., p. 126), Glover (op. cit., p. 146).

⁵⁵ Cf. Ebert, op. cit., p. 126, note 3. Also Schenkl, l. cit., p. 516. Moreover, to quote Glover (l. cit.): "Proba found a place by her poem in at least one list of the Church's famous men, a solitary woman among them, because, as Isidore (the compiler of said list) says, she sang the praise of Christ, and if we do not admire her conception, we praise her ingenuity....." (Isidore, de Vir. ill., c. 18) (P. L. 83, 1093).

⁵⁶ Cf. Huemer, Corp. Vindob. 16, p. XLIII sq.; Teuffel, op. cit., 473, 5.

⁵⁷ The subjoined text is from Schenkl's edition (Corp. Vindob. 16, p. 616 sqq.). For references to the Virgilian lines, see notes ib. Huemer's edition (Corp. Vindob. 10, p. 311 sq.) has these references also, but not quite so minutely worked out. (L. 12: II, 92 ib. should be II, 89). The text may be seen also in P. L. 19, 773 (with indication of Virgilian lines, ed. Arevalus, Rome, 1794), and this was reprinted in the Summa Aurea, vol. 5, 727 sqq.

⁵⁸ Faulty metres: line 11, *virgo matura*; l. 22, *adventu fides*; l. 25: one long syllable beyond the measure; l. 30, *exsequar cœlestia*. For other defects in the composition, cf. Schenkl, l. cit., p. 564.

- Intemerata toris. Talem se læta ferebat:
 Casta pudicitiam miro servabat amore.
- 15 Huic se forma dei—cælo demissus ab alto
 Spiritus intus alit—et casto corpore miscet.
 Ante tamen dubiam dictis solatur amicis:
 “Alma parens, mundi dominum paritura potentem—
 Nam te digna manent generis cunabula nostri,—
- 20 Vade, ait, O felix nati, quocumque vocaris,⁵⁹
 Auspiciis manifesta novis! hic vertitur ordo,
 Hujus in adventu fides, et fama perennis!⁵⁸
 Dixerat: illa pavens oculos suffusa nitentis,
 Suspirans imoque trahens a pectore vocem
- 25 Virgo refert: “Haut equidem tali me dignor honore.⁵⁸
 Non opis est nostræ nec fas, nec conjugis umquam
 Prætendi tædas aut hæc in fœdera veni.
 Sed post jussa deum nihil est quod dicta recusem.
 Accipio agnoscoque libens: sequor omina tanta
- 30 Promissisque patris exsequar cælestia dona,⁵⁸
 Ammiranda Dei tantarum munera laudum.”
- * * * * *
- 55 Haut mora: continuo patris præcepta facessit,
 Aethere se mittit figitque in virgine vultus,
 Nec mortale tuens, afflata est numine quando
 Jam propiore Dei.....nam tempore eodem⁶⁰
 Matri longa decem tulerunt fastidia menses,
- 60 Et nova progenies mox clara in luce refulsit.

This is somewhat clearer than the first selection, quoted from Proba. However, here also it is apparent that the meaning of the original has been strained to fit the subject; and some phrases had better been left out. Thus, ll. 15-16 seem to refer to the Holy Spirit; and yet from l. 17 one is left to infer that

⁵⁹ L. 20: Huemer's edition here, in conformity with the oldest MS. of this cento (Cod. S. Germ. 844; Paris, lat. 13048, 8-9th cent.) inserts *pietate* after *nati*, which results in a line of seven feet. Schenkl, as also P. L., omits it. (cf. Schenkl, l. cit., notes ad l.: “*pietate ejeci ut illatum ex Aen. III, 480*”).

⁶⁰ Schenkl, l. cit., note ad l.: “*excidisse videtur summi vel magni.*”

the angel was meant.⁶¹ The "cunabula generis nostri" (l. 18) can be made to have signification only by straining to the utmost the figurative meaning of cunabula. Line 20: "vade..... quocumque vocaris," is meaningless in this situation, and the "jussa deum" (l. 28) is pagan. Thus, the more closely this cento is analyzed, the more correctly is the judgment of Schenkl, cited above, found to be applicable to it as well as to that of Proba.⁶²

The cento writers have added nothing to Marian terminology, not even a picturesque figure from Virgil. The author of the *De Verbi Incarnatione* has left one beautiful line, which is beautiful, however, only if standing alone: (l. 14).

Casta pudicitiam miro servabat⁶³ amore.

Line 23 has poetic coloring; but it does not further beautify the image which Juvenecus had previously drawn of the Virgin of Nazareth.

⁶¹ It may be noted here that the word angel (angelus) is nowhere used by Virgil, and therefore could find no place in the cento; hence the locution: forma dei. Similarly all the proper names had to be replaced by figurative language.

⁶² The attempt to translate the passage closely, could only lead to a result as incoherent in meaning as is the original; and to force the lines and half-lines of the cento into connected language would be to give a false impression of it. No doubt the composers of centos,—of Christian centos, at least,—felt themselves obliged to be content with fairly intelligible combinations and to leave the rest to the imagination of their readers.

⁶³ Aen. VII, 57: *properabat*, replaced here by *servabat*.

CHAPTER V

To the fourth century must be assigned the *Carmen de Salvatore*.⁶⁴ It celebrates, in twenty hexameter lines, the praise of Christ as the Only-begotten of the Father, become man to redeem us by His passion and death, and returning again to heaven. It concludes with a prayer for the emperor.⁶⁵

- (Christe potens rerum, redeuntis conditor aevi
 Vox summi sensusque Dei, quem fundit ab alta
 Mente Pater, tantique dedit consortia regni,
 Impia tu nostrae domuisti crimina vitae
 5 Passus corporea mundum vestire figura
 Affarique palam populos hominemque fateri.)
 Quem verbo inclusum Mariae mox numine viso
 Virginei tumuere sinus, innuptaque Mater
 Arcano obstupuit compleri viscera partu,
 10 Auctorem paritura suum, mortalia corda,
 Artificem texere poli mundique, sub imo
 Pectore, qui⁶⁶ totum late complectitur Orbem.

⁶⁴ It is called also the *Carmen Paschale* of Pope Damasus (Cf. Ihm. *Anthol. Lat. Supplem. I*, Teubner, 1895, p. XXV; Manitius, op. cit., p. 325). The authorship has not been established. Existing MSS. attribute it to Claudian; the older editors to Damasus. Cf. Schanz, op. cit., p. 195 (*Die Echtheit der Damasusepigramme*): ".....das Gedicht de Salvatore.....sicher nichts mit Damasus zu thun hat;" Teuffel, op. cit., par. 439, 1: ".....doch hat er (i. e., Claudian) Christus als Erlöser besungen....." On the other hand, Manitius op. cit., p. 120, note 1: "Ich glaube jetzt bestimmt, dass dies Gedicht von Damasus verfasst ist." Ihm, l. cit., while rejecting the authorship of Damasus, is not convinced of that of Claudian (cf. also ib. p. 70).

⁶⁵ L. 19-20: Augustum foveas..... The text here given is from P. L. 13, 376 (edited originally by Merenda, Rome, 1754); it is the same as that of the edition of Sarazanius, Rome, 1638, p. 82, Carm. IX. It is found also in P. L. 53, 789-90, (where it is given as *dubiae auctoritatis*) with considerable variations, which agree in the main with the text of Ihm (op. cit., p. 69 sq.)

⁶⁶ The reading *qui* alone gives the sense which seems intended.

- Et qui non spatiis terrae, non aequoris undis,
 Nec capitur coelo, parvos confluit in artus.
 15 (Quin et supplicii nomen nexusque subisti:
 Ut nos subriperes letho, mortemque fugares
 Morte tua, mox aethereas evectus in auras,
 Purgata reparans laetum te luce, Parentem.⁶⁷
 Augustum foveas, festis ut saepe diebus
 20 Annua sinceri celebret jejunia Sacri.)

The lines referring to the Incarnation (7-14) may be thus rendered: "By a word he was enclosed, and soon the virginal womb of Mary by a visible Divine influence was pregnant, and the unwedded Mother wondered how with secret fruit her body grew; she was to give birth to her Maker. A mortal heart sheltered the creator of sky and earth in the depths of her bosom, Him who embraces the whole wide world. And He who is not confined by the expanse of the earth nor by the waters of the sea nor by the heavens, passed into the limbs of a child."

There is a certain solemnity and depth to these verses; and it is these characteristics, with the echoes of Neo-Platonic philosophy apparent, for example, in the "*vox summi sensusque Dei*," (l. 2) and the "*domuisti crimina*" (l. 4), that speak favorably for the authorship of Claudian.⁶⁸ At any rate this poem was highly esteemed in the early middle ages, as can be judged from the fact that some of its ideas were repeatedly used by later writers, as will be shown presently.

The thought of ll. 10-12 is quite striking and beautiful, and not found thus expressed in other poets. Lines 13-14 are a rhetorical development of the text in the third Book of Kings, VIII, 27: ".....heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee." The idea is a sublime one, and it has been

⁶⁷ This line is meaningless as it stands. The emended form reads: *Purgata repetis (repetens, Ihm) laetus tellure Parentem.*

⁶⁸ Cf. P. L. 13, 377, note: "*Certe carmen istud ceteris (i. e. the other poems of Damasus) longe est elegantior.*" The difference is so striking that Ihm says: "*de Damaso auctore cogitari omnino non possit.*" The author must have been a Christian. But Claudian was not a Christian, if the testimony of St. Augustine is accepted literally: "*.....poeta Claudianus, quamvis a Christi nomine alienus.*" (*De Civ. Dei*, V, 26, P. L. 41, 172). Cf. remark in Teuffel, op. cit., 439, 1).

not infrequently exploited by the poets. It has been incorporated in the votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the form of the distich that constitutes part of the Gradual:

Virgo Dei Genitrix, quem totus non capit orbis
In tua se clausit viscera factus homo.

and in the first response of the first nocturne of the common Office:quem coeli capere non poterant tuo gremio contulisti.

It appears in the selections from Merobaudes and from Dracontius that are added here, and again in somewhat amplified form in the Carmen Paschale of Sedulius (II, 59-62):

Quemque procellosi non mobilis unda profundi,
Terrarum non omne solum, spatiosaque lati
Non capit aula poli puerili in corpore plenus
Mansit, et angusto Deus in praesepe quievit.

He—whom nor waters of the stormy deep,
Nor earth's expanse, nor spacious vault of heaven,
Can hold,—within the body of a child,
In all his plenitude, abode, and God
Within a straitened manger took repose.⁶⁹

It is also the underlying thought of several strophes of the hymn *Quem terra, pontus, aethera*, attributed to Venantius Fortunatus,⁷⁰ and recurs very clearly in another, of later date: *Hymnum Mariae Virginis*.⁷¹

Quem coelum, terra non capit
Virginis vero uterus.

The few lines quoted above have been imitated also in other details. Thus l. 9 is practically repeated by Sedulius (Carm.

⁶⁹ Livius, op. cit., p. 447.

⁷⁰ Cf. below p. 76.

⁷¹ Its place is among the anonymous hymns of the 5th-11th cent. See text in Daniel, *Thesaurus Hymnologicus*, I, 141. See also text and remarks on this hymn in *An. Hymn. XXVII*, p. 120-121, and remarks *ib.*, p. 47. The lines quoted are 3-4 of strophe 6.

Pasch. II, 39-40): "Stupet innuba tensos Virgo sinus, gaudet-
que suum paritura parentem." And the "innupta Mater"—
the only appellation for Mary here used—occurs in Prudentius
as "innuba Virgo" (Apoth. 71) and is repeated from him by
Sedulius, in the lines just cited.

Very similar to the Carmen de Salvatore is the Carmen de
Christo of the 5th century Spanish soldier-poet Merobaudes:⁷²

Proles vera Dei cunctisque antiquior annis,⁷³
Nunc genitus, qui semper eras, lucisque repertor,
Ante tuae matrisque parens; quem misit ab astris
Aequaevus genitor, verbique in semina fusum
5 Virgineos habitare sinus, et corporis arti
Jussit inire vias, parvaque in sede morari,
Quem sedes non ulla capit;

* * * * *

15 te conscia partus
Mater, et attoniti pecudum sensere timores.
* * * * *

True Son of God, more ancient than all time,
Now born, who ever wast, Creator of light,
Whom, prior to Thy Mother and her Maker,
From heaven Thy coeval Father sent
In fecundating word enclosed, to dwell
In Virgin's womb, and bade Thee to assume
A narrow body's form and stay confined
In sparest habitation whom no space
Can compass.

* * * * *

⁷² He was a brave officer, and became a Councillor of State; a bronze statue was erected to him at Rome in 435. He was distinguished by his talents as rhetor, and wrote poems in honor of Valentinian III, after the manner of Claudian. (Manitius, op. cit., p. 325). His claim to the authorship of the Carmen de Christo or Laus Christi, as the title reads in P. L. 53, 789, seems undisputed. Cf. Teuffel, op. cit., 464, 2; Manitius, p. 325 sq.

⁷³ The text may be seen in P. L. 53, 789-90, and 61, 971 sqq. Also in Ihm, Anth. Lat. Supplem. I (Teubner), p. 71.

Thy Mother, conscious of Thy birth, knew Thee,
And the dumb beasts, fear-struck, Thy presence felt.

The similarity between the two compositions is so striking, that there can be no mistaking the fact that Merobaudes made a liberal use of the *Carmen de Salvatore*.⁷⁴ His treatment of the subject is, however, original enough to shield him from the charge of plagiarism. While the language in both is somewhat involved, so that both are defective from the point of view of clearness,⁷⁵ it must be admitted that the *Carmen de Salvatore* is the nobler production of the two. Comparing only the selections which refer to the Incarnation, it is evident how far the lines of Merobaudes fall short of those of his model in grandeur of conception and beauty of expression. The one takes us into the realm of sublime mystery and, as it were, bids us be astonished at the infinite condescension of God become a little child; the other tells us a mystery also, but in a somewhat common-place manner.

It is worthy of note that the poem of Merobaudes has a reference—one of the first in Christian Latin poetry—to the apocryphal accounts of the birth of Christ, by the mention (l. 16) of the animals there spoken of as present in the grotto of Bethlehem when the Savior was born: "te.....attoniti pecundum sensere timores."⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Cf. Manilius, *op. cit.*, p. 326, note 1, for detailed outline of similarities between the two poems.

⁷⁵ See the numerous emendations suggested, especially to the *Carm. Pasch. in Ihm*, *op. cit.*, p. 70-71.

⁷⁶ Cf. Pseudo-Matthew, XIV: "The very animals, therefore, the ox and the ass, having Him in their midst, incessantly adored Him. Then was fulfilled that which was said by Abacuc the prophet, saying: 'Between two animals thou art made manifest'." (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, New York, Scribner's, 1903, vol. VIII, p. 375). The reading: "Between two animals thou art made manifest", is from the Septuagint version. The Vulgate renders: "In medio annorum notum facies": "In the midst of the years thou shalt make it known" (thy work) (Hab. III, 2). A relief representing the ox and the ass at the crib is found on a sarcophagus in the Church of St. Trophimus at Arles, dating from the year 343 A. D. It seems to be the first representation of the kind. Cf. Lehner, *op. cit.*, p. 314 sq. The same in Liell, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

There is nothing new in the way of Marian terminology or imagery in the above selection.

It will be found interesting to compare with the foregoing excerpts also the following lines of the poet Dracontius.⁷⁷ (*Car-men de Deo*, II, 79-82, 87-94) :

- 79 Qui nasci dignatus homo, membratur in artus
Sanguine femineo concretus spiritus almus,
Fitque Deus post templa poli sub carne, figura
Passibilis, mortalis homo sine fine perennis:

* * * * *

- 87 Quid sanctus spiritus illic
Egerit, ipse potens noscit, qui cuncta creavit;
Qualiter aure Deus, verbo fetante marito,
90 Virgineos intrasse sinus dignatur, et alvum,
Terrarum, cœlique capax, atque ignis anhelis,
Aeris, et pelagi, sed non capiendus ab isdem,
Claustra puerperii passus sub lege creandi,
94 Vel quaecunque subit diversi temporis aetas.

Who condescending to be born as man
With members full endowed, of woman's blood
Is formèd palpable,—the loving spirit—
And God, His temple in the sky deserting
Is seen in carnal form and passible,
A mortal man, enduring evermore.

* * * * *

What there the Holy Ghost did operate,
He knows, the Mighty, who created all:
How God, through ear, by impregnating word,
Did deign to enter into Virgin's womb:
He who enthralled holds the earth and sky,
The blazing sun, the air, the sea, but not
By them can ever be confined, endures
The close confinement of a mother's womb,
Submits to law of being born and all
Whatever life's successive stages bear.

⁷⁷ He flourished at the court of the Vandal kings in Africa, towards the close of the 5th century. Cf. Manitius, *op. cit.*, p. 325; Ebert, *op. cit.*, I, 383.

Here again there is close resemblance, but also independent treatment. In nobility of expression this extract approaches the *Carmen Paschale* more closely than does that from *Mero-baudes*, without, however, equalling it in depth of thought.

From the point of view of Mariology, the selection from *Dracontius* is the least important of the three here quoted. The reference to Mary that it contains is, as it were, superficial merely. If it were not that the expression "*virgineos sinus*" is used (l. 90) one might think that the poet was thinking of the Incarnation of the Son of God altogether in a general way, and independently of the person of her through whom it was operated. This seems to be the natural interpretation of the passage, suggested by the very general term "*sanguine femineo concretus*," employed in line 80.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ What *Dracontius* says ll. 589-91 of the same Bk. refers to the knowledge and in-dwelling of God in the human soul:

Cum te non caperent coeli, terraeque, fretumque,
Aeris et spatium, modico te corde reponis
Pectoris humani, conceptus mente fideli.

CHAPTER VI.

The poetic productions of St. Ambrose are an insignificant portion of his voluminous writings, but they would by themselves suffice to render his name immortal. They are, as is well known, the incomparable liturgical hymns that he composed, which made him the "Father of Latin Hymnody."⁷⁹ They served as models for the vast majority of Liturgical hymns written in all succeeding ages. In fact all those that were modelled on his during the next four or five centuries were simply called "Ambrosian." Fourteen hymns from his pen have been preserved.⁸⁰ Of these, only two are of interest for the present study: *Jam surgit hora tertia*, and *Veni, Redemptor gentium* (*Intende qui regis Israel*). Both of them are among the four hymns of which the authenticity is established beyond doubt by the testimony of St. Augustine.⁸¹

The first is a hymn for Terce:⁸²

1. (*Jam surgit hora tertia,
Qua Christus ascendit crucem,
Nil insolens mens cogitet,
Intendat affectum precis.*)
2. (*Qui corde Christum suscipit,
Innoxium sensum gerit
Votisque perstat sedulis
Sanctum mereri spiritum.*)

⁷⁹ Blume, in *Cath. Encycl.*, art. Hymnody, vol. VII, p. 600a.

⁸⁰ Three others are of doubtful and a fourth of very doubtful authenticity. See list in Schanz, *op. cit.*, p. 208-9. The hymns are printed in *An. Hymn. L.*, p. 11 sqq. Nos. 421. See also *Cath. Encycl.*, vol. VII, p. 600a.

⁸¹ Cf. Schanz, *op. cit.*, p. 208-9. For a very able and beautiful explanation of them see Kayser, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-192.

⁸² The text is from *An. Hymn. L.*, p. 12. It may be seen also in *P. L.* 16, 1410; *Daniel*, I, p. 18; *Kayser*, *op. cit.*, p. 184-92. It is listed as No. 9400 in the *Repertorium Hymnologicum* of U. Chevallier.

3. Haec hora, quae finem dedit
Diri veterno criminis
Mortisque regnum diruit
Culpamque ab aevo sustulit.
4. Hinc jam beata tempora
Coepere Christi gratia,
Fidei replevit veritas
Totum per orbem ecclesias.)
5. Celso triumphi vertice
Matri loquebatur suae:
En, filius, mater, tuus;
Apostole, en, mater tua.
6. Praetenta nuptae foedera
Alto docens mysterio,
Ne virginis partus sacer
Matris pudorem laederet.
7. (Cui fidem caelestibus
Jesus dedit miraculis,
Nec credidit plebs impia;
Qui credidit, salvus erit.
8. Nos credimus natum Deum
Partumque virginis sacrae,
Peccata qui mundi tulit
Ad dexteram sedens Patris.)

The hour of Terce reminds the poet of the Crucifixion⁸³ and its attendant mysteries. He invites to recollection so that the soul may receive Christ and offer fervent prayers for the reception of the Holy Ghost, who came upon the Apostles at this hour.⁸⁴ In this hour Christ put an end to the ancient empire of sin and death and took away the sins of the world; from that

⁸³ Mark, XV, 25: "And it was the third hour; and they crucified Him."

⁸⁴ Acts, II, 2, 15.

hour the era of blessedness by the grace of Christ began, and Divine truth filled with faith the Churches throughout the world. "Exalted high on the pinnacle of His triumph, He spoke to His Mother: 'Mother, behold thy son: Apostle, behold thy Mother.' He teaches, in profound mystery, the apparent marriage of her who was espoused, lest the sacred child-bearing of the Virgin be a stain on the chastity of the Mother." The faith in this mystery (of the virginal birth) Jesus confirmed by miracles; yet, the impious nation did not believe. Whoever does believe, shall be saved. We believe, concludes St. Ambrose, in the Son of God, who is also the offspring of the Holy Virgin, in Him who took away the sins of the world, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

It will be admitted that the meaning of this hymn is rather obscure at first perusal. The testimony of St. Augustine is guarantee for its authenticity, which is therefore a settled fact. In his work *De natura et gratia contra Pelagianos*, c. 63⁸⁵ he says: "*Quem spiritum sanctus episcopus (Ambrosius) etiam precibus impetrandum admonet.....ubi in hymno suo dicit: Votisque praestat (perstat) sedulis, sanctum mereri Spiritum.*" Only the strophes 5 and 6 need, strictly, be treated here. Nevertheless, it may be permitted to remark that there is in the hymn an apparent admixture of ideas referring to the Crucifixion—strophes 1, 3, 5, 6,—and to the mysteries of Pentecost—strophes 2, 3, 7; and further, that the interpretation of the signs in nature at the death of Christ as giving proof of the perpetual virginity of Mary is quite unexpected, and probably unique. Kayser's explanation,⁸⁶ is, that St. Ambrose meant to affirm that salvation is possible only through faith in Christ who became man by being born of the Virgin Mary; hence Christ proclaimed the mystery that He is the Son of Mary by a virginal birth and that her betrothal to St. Joseph was only a means to shield her honor. However, what this has to do with the preceding strophe, in which Mary and the Apostle St. John are bid to regard each other as Mother and son, and with the following, in which the miracles that occurred at the death of Jesus are referred to, is not quite clear. Perhaps St. Am-

⁸⁵ P. L. 44, 284.

⁸⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 191 sq.

brose was especially preoccupied with those ideas at the time when he wrote this hymn, and probably he condensed his thought too much in endeavoring to compress it within the compass of the eight strophes to which all his hymns are limited. Be this as it may, the *Jam surgit hora tertia* is not among the most lucid of his hymns.

The strophes 5 and 6 contain the first mention in Latin poetry of the presence of Mary at the foot of the Cross. A long interval elapses before such mention occurs again; the first instance probably being in two hymns in honor of St. John the Evangelist, of the date of which no certain knowledge can be obtained, except that they were composed before the 11th century (and probably not before the 9th, if the supposition that they are of Germanic origin is correct).

It is most interesting to compare the respective strophes in these hymns with those of St. Ambrose just quoted, both from the point of view of treatment and of style.

In the first,⁸⁷ *Sollemnis dies advenit*, the fourth strophe reads, addressing Christ:

Cui matrem tali foedere
Mortis conjungis tempore,
Ut noverint se colere
Matris ac prolis nomine.

In the second, *De Patre Verbum prodiens*, the narration extends over three strophes (4-6):

Ascendens crucis arborem
Commendat matrem virginem
Jesus huic discipulo
Ut suimet vicario.

Ut virgo viro nescia
Et castitatis conscia
Solamen viri providi
Haberet dies saeculi.

⁸⁷ An. Hymn. LI, p. 184 and 185. Remarks on the date *ib.*

Accepit virgo virginem
 Corruptionis insciam
 Et par post Christum filius
 Deservit integerrimus.

There is no comparison between the plain statements in these poems and the vividness and power of the 5th strophe of the *Jam surgit*, and the profound meaning of the 6th. It is these qualities of vividness, depth and power, together with classical correctness of metre, that characterise all the hymns of the great Bishop,⁸⁸ and that have enabled scholars to select his compositions from among the multitude of Ambrosian hymns; though it must be admitted that some of these also are distinguished for metrical correctness, elevation of language and depth of thought and feeling.⁸⁹

The other hymn of St. Ambrose that has to be considered here is one for Christmas, *Veni, Redemptor gentium*. The text is as follows:⁹⁰

1. (Intende, qui regis Israel,
 Super Cherubim qui sedes,
 Appare Ephrem coram, excita
 Potentiam tuam et veni.)⁹¹

⁸⁸ See the eloquent tribute of Bishop Trench (Protestant Bishop of Dublin) in *Cath. Encycl.*, vol. VII, p. 600b.

⁸⁹ Only one other reference to Mary on Calvary—but without notice of St. John—is found in ecclesiastical poetry anterior to the 11th century; namely, in the hymn *Virga de Jesse generata stirpe*, str. 4, which reads:

Martyrum coetus nece purpuratus
 Te melodiis canat ordinatis,
 Morte quam Nati penetravit alti
 Mucro doloris.

The hymn is published in Mone, II, No. 579 (p. 392); it is from a Reichenau MS. of the 10th century.

⁹⁰ Text from *An. Hymn. L.*, p. 13 (No. 8). It may be seen also in *Daniel*, I, p. 12; *Mone*, I, No. 30; *Wackernagel*, I, p. 16-17; *P. L.* 16, 1410; *Summa Aurea*, XIII, 1527. It is listed as No. 21234 in *Chevalier's Repertorium Hymnologicum*. It is printed also in *P. L.* 86, 114 (*Brev. Goth. in Nativ. Domini N. J. Chr. ad Vesperas*) with 2 strophes added from *Sedulius* (*Faeno jacere pertulit, and Gaudet chorus coelestium*) and *Doxology*.

⁹¹ For the authenticity of this strophe, cf. *Schanz*, *op. cit.*, p. 209, 4.

2. Veni, Redemptor gentium,
Ostende partum virginis;
Miretur omne saeculum,
Talis decet partus Deum.
3. Non ex virili semine
Sed mystico spiramine,
Verbum Dei factum est caro,
Fructusque ventris floruit.
4. Alvus tumescit virginis,
Claustrum pudoris permanet,
Vexilla virtutem micant,
Versatur in templo Deus.
5. Procedat e thalamo suo
Pudoris aula regia,
Geminae gigas substantiae
Alacris ut currat viam.⁹²
6. (Egressus ejus a patre,
Regressus ejus ad patrem,
Excursus usque ad inferos,
Recursus ad sedem Dei.
7. Aequalis aeterno patri,
Carnis tropeo cingere,
Infirma nostri corporis
Virtute firmans perpeti.
8. Praesaepe jam fulget tuum,
Lumenque nox spirat suum,
Quod nulla nox interpolet
Fideque jugi luceat.)

⁹² Ps. XVIII, 6, 7: ".....tamquam sponsus procedens de thalamo suo. exsultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam....." It is in commenting this passage that St. Augustine mentions this hymn: "Hunc nostri gigantis excursus brevissime ac pulcherrime cecinit b. Ambrosius in hymno quem paulo ante cantastis." (Cf. Schanz, op. cit., p. 209, 4).

Come thou, Redeemer of the earth
And show the world thy Virgin birth,
Which every age shall praise and sing
As meet for Christ, our God and King.

Not from the seed of mortal race,
But by the spirit's mystic grace
The word of God hath flesh become
And flourished in the Virgin's womb.

That womb, the port of purity,
The haven of the Christ shall be;
The flags of virtue flash and shine,
The Virgin's womb is God's pure shrine.

Now from that hall of chastity
The Savior moves in majesty,
The conquering giant, man and God,
Triumphant on his wondrous road.

From God the Father is He come,
To God the Father goeth home,
Puts Hell beneath his conquering rod,
And sits upon the throne of God.

Peer of the Father, Lord benign,
Thou takest our flesh through love divine
Our feeble wills to fortify
And lift us to thyself on high.

Thy cradle shineth through the night
And fills the world with holy light,
That glory never shall decline
But strong with faith, eternal shine.⁹³

⁹³ Translation by Dan. J. Donahoe, in *Early Christian Hymns* (Donahoe Publ. Co., Middletown, Conn., 1911) Series II, p. 19-20. The translator has softened down some of the ruggedness of expression of the original. That this hymn was much esteemed and made use of in the middle ages, is shown by the number of copies of it that existed already before the 11th century. Mearns, *op. cit.*, indicates no fewer than 85. Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology* (London, Murray, 1892) mentions 23 translations into English verse. It was not adopted in the *Roman Breviary*.

This hymn sings the praises of the Incarnate Son of God, and proclaims only secondarily the glories of His virginal Mother. How beautiful and grand, however, she is made to appear to our mental view, and how insistently God's wonders in her favor are set forth: *miretur omne sæculum, talis decet partus Deum!* (2. 3-4), *claustrum pudoris permanet* (4. 2); *versatur in templo Deus* (4. 4); *procedat e thalamo suo, pudoris aula regia* (5. 1-2).⁹⁴ There is a vigor and wealth of meaning in these expressions, which really defy translation, and which later poets have not attained.⁹⁵

As regards the contribution of St. Ambrose to Marian terminology, attention may be called to the two expressions: "*claustrum pudoris*" (4. 2), and "*pudoris aula regia*" (5. 2), both of which are picturesque epithets extolling the undefiled virginity of the Mother of God. They were not overlooked by the poets. Thus, to take only the nearest to St. Ambrose in point of time, Sedulius interprets them by: "*domus pudici pectoris*,"⁹⁶ an equivalent phrase indeed, but far less imaginative. Further, the epithets *templum* (4. 4) and *thalamus* (5. 1) as applied to Mary, are also new in Christian poetry; and they captivated the fancy of the poets even more than the first two. Sedulius repeats the very words "*templum Dei*,"⁹⁷ and so does St. Paulinus of Nola: "*Deus.....in virgine templum.....condidit*,"⁹⁸ Fortunatus varies them to "*aula Dei*", "*hospitium vitæ*".⁹⁹ In the almost bewildering mass of Marian hymns of the later middle ages, the expressions "*cella pudicitiae*", "*Trinitatis thronus*", etc., meet the eye quite frequently.

⁹⁴ Compare with this line his *Exhortatio Virginitatis*, IV, 27 (P. L. 16, 343): "*Quis non venerabitur aulam pudoris?*" This text seems to have been wrongly interpreted by Livius, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

⁹⁵ See Kayser's masterly exposition of the hymn and in particular of the 3rd strophe (*op. cit.*, p. 172 sqq.)

⁹⁶ Hymn: *A solis ortus, cardine*, str. 4, l. 1.

⁹⁷ In the hymn referred to:

Domus pudici pectoris
Templum repente fit Dei.

⁹⁸ *Poema XXV*, 155-156 (P. L. 61, 636).

⁹⁹ *Laudes S. Mariæ*, 209, 210 (P. L. 88, 281).

CHAPTER VII

Of all the early Christian Latin poets, Prudentius¹⁰⁰ is the one whom the student of literature takes up with most satisfaction. He offers productions that bear the stamp of real genius, and are characterized by great variety and originality. It could be expected that he should contribute a great share to the store of Marian poetry, and the expectation is realized. Prudentius has shown himself as original in this subject as in any other that he treated; and while he left no independent poem in honor of Mary, he has notably varied the existing phraseology, added much picturesqueness of detail to the imagery, and left a description of her place in the work of the Redemption that impresses itself indelibly on the memory.

There are numerous references to the Blessed Virgin Mary scattered through his works. The first of these, which is also the most exquisite, is found in the third hymn of the *Cathermerion*,¹⁰¹ ll. 141-155. In this hymn, entitled "Ante cibum", the poet, after invoking the presence and blessing of Christ for his frugal repast, and enumerating the kinds of food that he permits the Christian to partake of, is led to speak of the sin of our first parents in paradise,—a sin committed by eating of the forbidden fruit.

"The perfidious Dragon allured the mind of the virgin (Eve) to urge her husband to eat of the forbidden fruit, and thus to ruin herself together with him" (ll. 111-115). The punishment follows immediately: (ll. 126-130)¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ He was a Spaniard, probably a native of Tarragona; born, 348; devoted himself to political life, and rose to considerable eminence, being at one time employed in important affairs of State near the emperor. The latter part of his life he devoted to poetry, and published an edition of his works in 405. The date of his death is uncertain. Cf. Schanz, *op. cit.*, p. 211 sq. *Cath. Encycl.*, etc. In particular, Brys: *De Vita et Scriptis Prud.*, Louvain, 1855 (Dissertation).

¹⁰¹ This name signifies hymns for the various periods of the day. (Schanz: *Tagzeitenbuch*).

¹⁰² P. L. 59, 805.

Auctor et ipse doli coluber
 Plectitur improbus, ut mulier
 Colla trilingua calce terat.
 Sic coluber muliebre solum
 Suscipit, atque virum mulier.

The wicked serpent, author of all guile,¹⁰³
 Receives for doom, that Woman, with her heel,
 His head and neck, and three-forked tongue should crush.
 Thus for the woman's heel the serpent waits:
 The woman thus her husband doth ensnare.¹⁰⁴

Behold there comes a new offspring, another Man, sent from
 heaven, born of a virgin, and the prophecy of the ultimate
 defeat of the Dragon is fully accomplished (ll. 141-155).¹⁰⁵

Fit caro vivida sermo patris,
 Numine quem rutilante gravis
 Non thalamo, neque jure tori,
 Nec genialibus illecebris
 Intemerata puella parit.

Hoc odium vetus illud erat,
 Hoc erat aspidis, atque hominis
 Digladiabile discidium,
 Quod modo cernua femineis
 Vipera proteritur pedibus.

¹⁰³ This and the following English versions are from Livius, *op. cit.*, p. 444 sq. The sense is rendered somewhat freely here and there.

¹⁰⁴ In this and the next line, the translation does not agree with the gloss found in P. L. 59, 805: *Suscipit, sc. super se, timet; Iso, timet.* Cf. also Burnam, *Glossemata de Prudentio* (Univ. Press, Cincinnati, 1905) p. 24. According to the gloss, the meaning is: the serpent is under (fears) the heel of the woman, and the woman is subject to man. (Iso was a monk of St. Gall, about 900 A. D., probably the teacher of Notker Balbulus, the great Sequence-writer. P. L. 59, 577, no. 16. Cf. also the notice in *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, vol. 26, p. 92b sq. and in *Herder's Kirchenlexikon*, vol. 6, 1025 sq.)

¹⁰⁵ P. L. 59, 806-7.

Edere namque Deum merita¹⁰⁶
 Omnia virgo venena domat:
 Tractibus anguis inexplicitis¹⁰⁷
 Virus inerme piger revomit,
 Gramine concolor in viridi.

The Father's word appears in living flesh,
 Whom, without earthly fatherhood begot,
 Conceived by the Holy Spirit's Flame,
 A maid in spotless purity, brings forth.
 This was that ancient lasting enmity,
 The internecine war to death, between
 The serpent and mankind, which laid at length
 The Dragon prostrate, crushed by Woman's feet;
 Since now the Virgin, who hath merited
 God to bring forth, his venom all subdues.
 For see, that Serpent, with entwisted coils,
 On the green grass, himself of colour green,
 His venom, harmless now slow vomits forth.¹⁰⁸

It is almost impossible for any translation to render the expressiveness and beauty of those lines. The inviolate virginity of the Mother of God and her power over the demon are here clearly pointed out; and moreover the lines

Edere namque Deum merita,
 Omnia virgo venena domat

are an indication, very evident, it would seem, of the "Catholic instinct," which believed in her Immaculate Conception from the very origin of the Church.¹⁰⁹ Finally, the picture drawn

¹⁰⁶ On this line, see commentary in P. L. 59, 806: *theologi quaerunt an B. Virgo meruerit merito proprio dicto esse mater Dei.*

¹⁰⁷ *Inexplicitis* is explained in the gloss (Iso) by "innumerable" (P. L. 59, 807; Burnam, l. cit.).

¹⁰⁸ Livius, *op. cit.*, p. 449-51. See Lehner's pleasing rendering, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

¹⁰⁹ Arevalus (proleg. in edit. Rom. *op. Prud. cap. X*) wonders why these lines of Prudentius were never referred to by the defenders of the belief in the Immaculate Conception. (P. L. 59, 671 sqq.) This chapter (X) is reprinted in *Summa Aurea* V, 779 sqq.

by the poet in the lines (149-155)

(Quod modo) cernua femineis
Vipera proteritur pedibus

* * *

Tractibus anguis inexplicitis
Virus inerme piger revomit
Gramine concolor in viridi

is so vivid, that one is tempted to believe it a description of a painting or statue representing the Immaculate Conception such as we are accustomed to see in modern times. But it is probably merely a product of his own richly endowed poetic fancy.¹¹⁰ His conception is unique; no other of the early poets imagined anything that even distantly resembles it.¹¹¹

The above passage also shows that the text of Genesis with which Prudentius was familiar, had the reading of the Vulgate: "Ipsa conteret caput tuum....." (Gen. III, 15).¹¹²

¹¹⁰ There is no picture or relief of the kind among the representations of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the early ages. See reproductions in the plates appended to Lehner's work. Cf. also Liell., op. cit., and Beissel, S. J., *Bilder aus der Geschichte der altchristlichen Kunst und Liturgie in Italien*, Freiburg (Herder) 1899.

¹¹¹ Three others of the early Christian Latin poets had occasion to treat of the prophecy the fulfilment of which is here described by Prudentius. They are: Cyprian, a Gallic poet, of the beginning of the fifth century (cf. Manitius, op. cit., p. 167); Claudius Marius Victor, a teacher of rhetoric at Marseilles, who flourished before the middle of the same century (cf. biographical notice of Gennadius, in P. L. 58, 1094); and Alcimius Avitus, bishop of Vienne, 490-518 (cf. art. by Rt. Rev. Shahan in *Cath. Encycl.* vol. II, 161a). All three put into verse the story of Genesis; their work, however, is essentially narrative, and of the three only Avitus furnishes a few casual interpretations of the sacred text. The prophecy in question is merely repeated by them, in poetical phraseology. See Cyprian's *Pentateuch* in *Corp. Vindob.* 23 (ed. Peiper) and P. L. 19, 315 (as sequence to the work of Juvenius, to whom it was formerly attributed); Victor's *Alethia* in *Corp. Vindob.* 16 (ed. Schenkl) followed by the interpolated text of Jean de Galigny which is reproduced in P. L. 61. 937 sqq.; and Avitus's *De Sententia Dei*, in P. L. 59, 337 sqq.

¹¹² Perhaps he already knew the Vulgate. The translation of the Old Testament was completed by St. Jerome in 405 A. D. The Itala version read: "Ipsa servabit caput tuum....." Cf. P. Sabbathier: *Bibl. Sac. Lat. Versiones Antiquae*. Rheims, 1743, Vol. I.

There is a passing reference to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the 9th hymn of the Cathemerinon (Hymnus in omni hora) ll. 19-21:¹¹³

O beatus ortus ille, virgo cum puerpera
Edidit nostram salutem, feta sancto Spiritu,
Et puer redemptor orbis os sacratum protulit.¹¹⁴

"Oh, the blessed birth, when the Virgin-Mother brought forth our salvation, having conceived of the Holy Ghost; and when her Child, the Redeemer of the world, showed His sacred countenance!"

Again, in the hymn for Christmas, the 11th of the Cathemerinon ll. 13-16, 53-60:¹¹⁵

Emerge, dulcis pusio,
Quem mater edit castitas,
Parens, et expers conjugis;
Mediator, et duplex genus.

* * * *

Sentisne, Virgo nobilis,
Matura per fastidia
Pudoris intactum decus
Honore partus crescere?

O quanta rerum gaudia
Alvus pudica continet!
Ex qua novellum saeculum
Procedit, et lux aurea.¹¹⁶

"Appear, sweet child, whom mother chastity brings forth, a parent not knowing consort; thou (who art) Mediator, of nature two-fold. Art thou aware, O noble Virgin, as thy time draws near, that the inviolate glory of thy virginity is en-

¹¹³ P. L. 59, 864. This strophe is translated by Lehner, op. cit., p. 263.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Aen. VIII, 591.

¹¹⁵ P. L. 59, 890, 894-895. The title of this hymn is; VIII Kalendas Januarias.

¹¹⁶ The second and third strophes quoted are translated by Lehner, op. cit., p. 263.

hanced by the honor of child-birth? Oh, what immeasurable joys are hid in that chaste womb, whence issues a new age and a golden light."

Here, for the first time in poetry, there seems to be direct address of the Mother of God. Probably, however, it is mere apostrophe; for the strophe following is in the nature of an exclamation; and it may well be argued that the poet, if really fired by the mental view of his subject, would have continued to address her. The poem, besides, is highly lyric in character, and has an air of absolute spontaneity: description alternates with apostrophe, personal reflection, and exclamation, in the liveliest manner, so that it is difficult to tell precisely in every instance what view or motive inspired the thought to which the poet gives expression.

In the poem entitled *Apotheosis*, which aims to prove the Divinity of Christ, there are two passages referring to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Prudentius insists that the virginal conception of Christ is proof of His Divinity; and if the unbelieving heretic refuses assent, he is bid to follow the example of the Holy Virgin, who believed the Angel and so conceived Christ (ll. 568-580):¹¹⁷

- 568 *Intactum thalami virtus divina puellam*
Sincero flatu per viscera casta maritat.
- 570 *Incomperta ortus novitas jubet, ut Deus esse*
Credatur Christus sic conditus; innuba virgo
Nubit Spiritui, vitium nec sentit amoris.
Pubertas signata manet, gravis intus, et extra
Incolumis, florens de fertilitate pudica,
- 575 *Jam mater, sed virgo tamen; maris inscia mater.*
Quid renuis? quid inane caput, non credule, quassas?
Angelus hoc sancto pronuntiat ore, placetne
Credere, et angelicis aurem reserare loquelis?
Ipsa coruscantis monitum sacra virgo ministri
- 580 *Credidit, atque ideo concepit credula Christum.*
The Spouse Divine the untouched Maiden weds
Breathing within her holiest influence.
The birth's unheard-of prodigy demands,

¹¹⁷ P. L. 59, 969. Translated (in German hexameter verse) by Lehn-
 er, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

That Christ, thus formed, should be believed true God.
 The unwedded Virgin, now the Spirit's Bride,
 Her senses free from taint of earthly love,
 In purity conceives. Virginité
 Flowers into fruitfulness. She thus becomes
 The Virgin Mother—she who “knows not man.”
 Why dost deny, why, faithless, shake thy head?
 The angel this affirms with sacred lips:
 Wilt not believe? not heed the angelic word?
 When came the shining Minister from heaven,
 The holy Virgin straight his word believed;
 And, through believing, thus the Christ conceived.¹¹⁸

The poet continues his argumentation further on (ll. 642-49):¹¹⁹

- 642 Quae porro causa, aut ratio submittere colla
 Ante pedes Mariae, puerique crepundia parvi,
 Si tantum mortalis erat, nec summa potestas
 645 Implebat teneros divinis flatibus artus?
 Sed jam tolle magos, thus, aurum, myrrhea dona,
 Quae verum docuere Deum:¹²⁰ praesepia, pannos,
 Matris adoratum gremium,¹²¹ face sideris ardens,
 Ipsa Deum virtus factorum, et mira loquantur.
 What cause indeed or reason was there, then,
 That they should bend their neck before the feet
 Of Mary and the Child's mere human form,
 If only mortal He, nor highest power
 With breath divine those tender members filled?

¹¹⁸ Translation from Livius, op. cit., p. 451. Three lines (576-8) have been added to the text there given.

¹¹⁹ P. L. 59, 975.

¹²⁰ Cf. Juvenecus, I, 249-51:

....munera tria

Thus, aurum, myrrham regique hominique Deoque
 Dona dabant.

¹²¹ The word *adorare* was not originally restricted to the sense in which it is now used exclusively in English: to honor with supreme worship. It signified merely to speak to, hence, to entreat; and finally, as applied to the Deity, to honor. Even in the Vulgate we read: “And when he came to David, he fell upon his face and adored.” (II, Kgs. I, 3). The term is kept in this broader sense in the translation.

But grant there be no Magi, incense, gold,
 Nor gifts of myrrh, that Him true God affirmed:
 The manger, swaddling clothes, His Mother's bosom
 Adorable, all radiant with the torch
 Of Bethlehem's star, the power and the wonders
 Of His deeds, proclaim Him God.

The polemical character of the Apotheosis permitted rather of forceful argumentation than of flights of fancy, and the two passages quoted show that characteristic. In proving the Divinity of Christ, his main argument is the virginal conception and birth, and he insists on it in terms very similar to those used in the *Laudes Domini*, to which attention was drawn previously. There it is stated:

Ne tamen insignem res nulla ostenderet ortum,
 Virgine conciperis.....

and Prudentius argues similarly:

Incomperta ortus novitas jubet, ut Deus esse
 Credatur Christus.....

and he goes on, for four lines more (572-75) to explain this "incomperta ortus novitas", and expresses astonishment that the unbeliever can still shake his head and refuse to believe.¹²²

Mention must be made here also of the selections from the *Dittochaeon*¹²³ in which the Blessed Virgin Mary is spoken of. They are Nos. 25 and 27. The text reads as follows:¹²⁴

25. Gabriel ad Mariam.
 Adventante Deo descendit nuntius alto

¹²² It is likely that he read the *Laudes Domini*, which appears to have been a sort of pamphlet intended for wide circulation. Cf. Schanz, op. cit., p. 187.

¹²³ The *Dittochaeon* consists of 49 sections, 4 lines each, describing 24 scenes of the Old Testament and 25 of the New (hence also probably the name *Dittochaeon*, which may be rendered: two-fold refection, or double banquet). They are probably inscriptions for pictures. Cf. Schanz, op. cit., p. 227 sq. Manitius, p. 96 sqq. Ebert, p. 288 sqq., and note 3, p. 289.

¹²⁴ P. L. 60, 101, 102. Text also in *Summa Aurea*, V, 782. See Lehn-er's translation, op. cit., p. 265.

Gabriel Patris ex solio, sedemque repente
 Intrat virgineam, Sanctus te Spiritus, inquit,
 Implebit, Maria; Christum paries, sacra Virgo.

27. Magorum munera.

Hic pretiosa magi sub virginis ubere Christo
 Dona ferunt puero, myrrhaeque, et thuris, et auri.
 Miratur genitrix tot casti ventris honores,
 Seque Deum genuisse hominem, regem quoque summum.

"When God was about to come, Gabriel, the messenger, descended from the throne of the Father on high, and suddenly entered the virginal abode: 'The Holy Ghost will fill thee, Mary,' he said, 'thou wilt bring forth Christ, O holy Virgin'."—"Here the Magi bring precious gifts to the Christ-child at the Virgin's breast, gifts of myrrh, incense and gold. The mother is in astonishment at so great honors (rendered to the fruit) of her chaste womb, and that she bore God, who is man, and the most high King."

Finally, in the *Psychomachia*,¹²⁵ there is a remarkable tribute to Mary's Divine maternity. The poem describes the combat between the vices and virtues for the possession of the soul.¹²⁶ Chastity, the second virtue to appear in the lists,¹²⁷ after overcoming her adversary, voluptuousness, argues in her speech of victory that this vice cannot hope to rear its head again, after the chaste Judith, in figure, slew Holofernes; then she cries out (ll. 70-88):¹²⁸

¹²⁵ P. L. 60, 11-90.

¹²⁶ Schanz, (op. cit., p. 224), Ebert (p. 281) and Glover (p. 264 sq.) widen the scope of the poem by interpreting it to represent also the struggle between paganism and Christianity. Lejay's very unfavorable opinion of this work (Cath. Encycl. vol. XII, p. 518a) is by no means shared by other critics (Glover, Ebert, Schanz, l. cit., Manitius, op. cit., p. 73 sqq.) who speak very favorably of the work.

¹²⁷ P. L. 60, 24-31. See description of MS. illustrations accompanying this part of the poem (ll. 40-108) in R. Stettiner, *Die illustrierten Prudentiushandschriften*, Berlin (Preuss) 1895 (Doctorate Dissertation), pp. 243-255, and copy of two illustrations, *ib.*, p. 191, nos. 1 and 2.

¹²⁸ P. L. 60, 27-29.

- 70 Numquid et intactae post partum virginis ullum
 Fas tibi jam superest? Post partum Virginis, ex quo
 Corporis humani naturam pristina origo
 Deseruit, carnemque novam vis ardua sevit,
 Atque innupta Deum concepit femina Christum,
 75 Mortali de matre hominem, sed cum Patre numen.
 * * * * *

Victa jaces, lutulenta Libido,

- 88 Nec mea post Mariam potis es perfringere jura.

What! longer, any right remain to thee,
 After the Child-birth of the Virgin pure?
 After the Virgin's Child-birth! When in sort,
 Man's fleshy nature its first origin
 Had lost; and mightily a force Divine
 Sowed flesh anew; and Woman, husbandless,
 The Christ, true God conceived—very Man
 Of mortal Mother, with His Father One.
 * * * * *

Prostrate thou art, and conquered, slimy Lust,
 Nor, after Mary, canst my rights infringe.¹²⁹

The idea expressed in these lines may not have been the poet's personal opinion merely. That Mary's perpetual virginity and Divine maternity were among the most astounding of miracles, and the greatest triumph over the demon of uncleanness and the corruption of the human race, may well have been the conviction of every noble mind in his age. When one recalls to what depths of degradation the pagan world had fallen, it would seem but natural that by sheer force of contrast virginity should have been looked upon with special wonder, and the superhuman exaltation of this virtue in Mary should have been honored with peculiar delight and devotion.

Most, if not all, of the foregoing selections cited from the works of Prudentius are merely passing references to the Mother of God. By their highly developed form they point to the fact that she was exercising a growing attraction on the minds of the poets, which was certain soon to make of her an independent subject for the exercise of their best talent. Al-

¹²⁹ Livius, *op. cit.*, p. 451.

ready in regard to the work of Juvencus it was pointed out, that there is more than mere narrative in his treatment of the incidents of her life; from his remarks one can reconstruct the portrait of her as it existed in his mind. The genius of Prudentius, was roused in a far greater degree before her image. If Juvencus knew her particularly as the modest, humble virgin and tender mother, qualities that make her eminently lovable, Prudentius saw her clothed in the splendor of her virginal Divine maternity, and he spared no pains to communicate the enthusiasm with which that sight filled his soul. Her name he mentions only once (*Psych.* 88) but her image stood forth perfectly clear and beautiful in his mind. He speaks neither of her humility, nor of her charity, nor of her sufferings and her part in the Redemption. When writing against heretics, he extols also her faith: *concepit credula Christum* (*Apoth.* 580).¹³⁰ But beyond this, he knows her only as *virgo* (*Cath.* III, 153), *virgo nobilis* (*Cath.* XI, 53), *sacra virgo* (*Apoth.* 579; *Ditt.* 25, 4), *virgo puerpera*¹³¹ (*Cath.* IX, 19); *intemerata puella* (*Cath.* III, 145), *innuba virgo* (*Apoth.* 71), incor-

¹³⁰ Lines 583-84 of the Apotheosis have not been adduced here, because they may be taken in a general sense; namely, that virginity and faith are dispositions requisite that the soul may be made to participate in the life of Christ. Livius (*op. cit.*, p. 451) seems to interpret them in this way; for he translates:

Virginity and ready faith drink in
Christ to the inmost soul, from whence, there formed
In hiding-places pure, they bring Him forth.

¹³¹ This term was first used among the Christian poets by St. Hilary of Poitiers, in the second strophe of the hymn *Ante saecula*:

Bis nobis genitus Deus,
Christe, dum innato nasceris a Deo,
Vel dum corporeum et Deum
Mundo te genuit Virgo puerpera.

(Anal. Hymn. L, p. 4).

(As this is the only mention of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the authentic hymns of St. Hilary, it was deemed sufficient to incorporate it in the note at this place. On the authenticity of this and the two succeeding hymns published in *An. Hymn. L*, see introductory remarks *ib.* p. 3-4). The word *puerpera* itself is old in Latin literature, having been used already by Plautus, *Amph.* V, I, 40. Another hymn attributed to St. Hilary of Poitiers, the *Hymnum dicat turba fratrum*, contains two strophes (6 and 7) referring to the Blessed Virgin. Its authenticity, however, is not established. Cf. *An. Hymn. LI*, p. 264.

rupta mater (Apoth. 932-33).¹³² She is numine rutilante gravis (Cath. III, 142), feta Sancto Spiritu (Cath. IX, 20), florens de fertilitate pudica (Apoth. 574). In fact, in the passage quoted from the Apotheosis, the poet seems to be at pains to express clearly and fully his admiration of that extraordinary privilege of her virginal maternity (ll. 571-575). If all this is added to the picture of the Virgin who, being deemed worthy to bring forth God, stands with her feet on the prostrate form of the conquered Serpent (Cath. III, 149 sqq.), there results a mosaic of splendid beauty. To find something similar, one must wait till the days of Fortunatus, who in his diffuse but agreeable way describes her glory in heaven.

¹³² Cf. also Psych. 70: intacta virgo; 74: innupta femina. Similarly, also ll. 96-97, 614.

CHAPTER VIII.

From the prolific pen of St. Paulinus of Nola,¹³³ we have a narrative in verse of the Annunciation and the Visitation. It is incorporated in his panegyric in honor of St. John the Baptist (*Carmen VI*) one of his earlier Christian productions.¹³⁴ As the selection is rather lengthy, only the first part is given here. After telling of the vision of Zachary, the poet continues: (ll. 108-138)¹³⁵

- 108 *Inde aliud sanctus Gabriel, qui nuntius idem*
Zachariae fuerat, multo maiora volutans,
 110 *Ad Mariam molitur iter, quae sponsa marito,*
Sed mage lecta Deo, mundi paritura salutem
Virgo illibatam servabat casta pudorem.
Cui postquam insignis coelesti forma decore
Constitit ante oculos, vultus demissa pudicos
 115 *Tinxit suffuso rutilantes sanguine malas.*
Ille ait: O toto quem solis circulus ambit,
Quaeque fuere prius, quae sunt, quae deinde sequentur,
Virginibus cunctis felicior orbe puella,
Magno lecta Deo, mater dicaris ut ejus,
 120 *Cujus et ille pater! felix age concipe pondus,*
Impolluta viro coituque immunis ab omni,
Verbo feta Dei; corpus tua viscera praesent

¹³³ He was one of the most prominent personages in the Roman Empire at the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, because of his high birth (Bordeaux, about 353), the office of consul with which he was at one time invested (before 379, the year in which his teacher Ausonius had this dignity, cf. Schanz, *op. cit.*, p. 236), the admiration that he won from all Western Christendom by his holy life and his largesses to the poor and to all good works, and finally by his numerous poetic writings, especially the poems in honor of St. Felix of Nola and the letters to Ausonius and other important men. He died June 21, 431. (See art. by K. Loeffler in *Cath. Encycl.*, vol. XI, p. 585b; Schanz, *op. cit.*, p. 235 sqq., and 250; etc.)

¹³⁴ He was baptized at Bordeaux in 389.

¹³⁵ Text in *Corp. Vindob.* 30, p. 11 sq. P. L. 61, 444-45.

- Illi, qui coelum, terras, mare, sidera fecit,
 Qui semper fuit, et nunc est et tempore in omni
 125 Semper erit: mundi Dominus, lucisque creator,
 Et lux ipse poli, per te mortalia membra
 Induet; atque oculos hominum, coetusque subibit.
 Imperturbatos tantarum in praemia laudum
 Tolle animos, dabit ille tibi viresque, fidemque,
 130 Qui voluit (nam cuncta regit, nutuque gubernat)
 Filius esse tuus, Domini cum Filius esset.
 Dixerat, et visus pariter terrasque reliquit
 Assuetumque sibi facili petit aethera nisu.
 Implentur praecepta Dei, creditque puella
 135 Protinus, atque auget meritum vitamque priorem
 Prompta fides: Tacitis elementa latentia causis
 Divinum informant corpus sacrandaque crescit
 Sarcina, coelestem Dominum pia confovet alvus.

Thereafter, holy Gabriel, the same
 Who messenger had been to Zachary,
 Far greater things to tell, to Mary comes
 Who, trothed to husband, but to God more dear,—
 The world's salvation was she to bring forth—
 A virgin chaste, had undefiled preserved
 Her modesty: when stood before her eyes
 The wondrous form in heavenly radiance clothed,
 With modest look to earth she gazed, while glowed
 Her reddened cheeks with blush suffused.

He spoke: O thou most happy maid of all
 The virgins that have ever been before,
 Are now and shall hereafter be, in all
 The sun-encircled earth; O loved of God,
 Who Mother shalt be called of Him, of whom
 He Father is! Yea, happy one, receive
 The gift divine, untouched of man, exempt
 From nature's law, fecund with word of God.
 To Him shalt body give who made the sky
 The earth, the sea, the stars; who ever was
 Is now and in all time shall ever be:
 Lord of the world, Creator of the light,
 Himself the light of heaven; He through thee

In mortal members clothed shall be, appear
 In visible form and hold converse with men.
 Lift up your spirit, undisturbed 'mid praise
 So great; for power and faith will he bestow
 Who willed—for all things yield to His good pleasure—
 To be thy son, though Son of God He be.

This said, he left her sight, and fled the earth
 And effortless regained the ethereal realms.
 The command of God fulfills itself, the maid
 Believes forthwith; her joyous ready faith
 Augments the worth of her anterior life:
 The secret elements in silence fashion
 The form Divine, while grows the sacred burden;
 In cherished shrine the Lord of Heaven rests.

This excerpt exemplifies very well the characteristics of the style and manner of Paulinus: an easy-flowing versification, a considerable freedom of treatment and amplification of portions of the text before him, some picturesqueness of language, and withal an agreeable manner of presentation. It is not difficult to read the text of St. Luke from out the diffuse rendering of the poet, and on the other hand for such as are unfamiliar with the original, the story is told with sufficient clearness.

Of poetic phrases or epithets referring to the Blessed Virgin Mary, there is nothing new. Her marvellous virginity is considerably enlarged upon, but that is all.

It is easy to recognize the phraseology of Juvencus in this extract.¹³⁶ Thus, Juvencus says of Gabriel (I, 52-53): "*majora idem mandata minister detulit;*" and Paulinus (ll. 108-109): "*Gabriel,.....nuntius idem.....multo majora volutans.*" Again, Juvencus tells us, of Mary (I, l. 55): "*abditā virgineis caste pubescere tectis.....permissa;*" and Paulinus (l. 112): "*Virgo illibatum servabat casta pudorem.*" For Juvencus, she is "*lectissima Virgo*" (I, 69); for Paulinus, "*lecta Deo*" (l. 111) and "*magno lecta Deo*" (l. 119). The departure of the angel is thus told by Juvencus (I, 79): "*abscedens vacuis se*

¹³⁶ Cf. Manitius, op. cit., p. 271: "*.....es ist (das Gedicht) oft in engem Anschluss an Juvencus verfasst.....*"

condidit auris;" and by Paulinus (l. 133): "assuetum sibi facili petit aethera nisu."

Other similarities might also be pointed out.¹³⁷ However, such analysis must not be pressed too far. Both poets treated the same subjects, and drew their material from the same Scripture narrative; and, moreover, it could be expected that Paulinus would consult his predecessor in this field for guidance, especially if it is recalled in what high honor Juvenecus was held at all times during the middle ages. Finally, the details of ll. 113-115, are altogether in the style of Paulinus; he draws pictures that are full of life and color. He applied well the lessons received in the school of Ausonius at Bordeaux.¹³⁸

Paulinus speaks of the Incarnation, in his picturesque way, also in the Epithalamium that is found among his works.¹³⁹ After giving the bridal pair various admonitions as to the manner of celebrating their nuptials in a Christian manner, that is, by avoiding exterior pomp and vanity, and by adorning their souls with virtues instead, he expresses the wish that Jesus attend them, and Mary, His Mother, whose miraculous fecundity he then enlarges upon. It is fitting, he says, that Mary, the mother of the Lord be present with these betrothed, she who bore God without violation of her virginity.¹⁴⁰ For God founded for Himself a peaceful temple in the sacred Virgin, a secret shrine, and came down silently, like the rain falls from a cloud on a fleece with the softness of dew. No one was ever admitted

137 Cf. Juv. I, 58; Paul. 111. (In the account of the Visitation: Juv. I, 85, 88-90; Paul. 145, 155-56). For models and imitators of Paulinus, cf. Index in Peiper's ed. Corp. Vindob. 30, p. 380.

138 Cf. Ebert, op. cit., I, p. 311: ".....die Schule der gallischen Rhetorik, diesich gern mit Redeblumen schmueckte."

139 Carm. XXV, ed. Hartel, Corp. Vindob. 30, p. 238 sqq. P. L. 61, 633. It was written on the occasion of the marriage of Julian, son of Memor, the Bishop of Capua, and Ia (Titia) (Schanz, op. cit., p. 241.)

140 Quae genuit salva virginitate Deum (l. 154), a line repeated in the first distich of the fragmentary poem "Miracula Christi", whose author is unknown. Perhaps it is to be attributed to Merobaudes (Manitius, op. cit., p. 326) following whose Carmen de Christo, here entitled Laus Christi, it is printed in P. L. 53, 789. Only the first distich refers to the Blessed Virgin Mary (but the poem is reproduced entirely in the Summa Aurea V, 1042).

to this secret, by which God assumed human nature of a virgin-mother. O new invention of the Lord for man's salvation! alone, a woman becomes fecund; betrothed to spouse, she is not subject to husband; mother by child-birth, yet woman undefiled; consort by wedlock's tie, yet not by nature's law; inviolate, yet proven mother by her child. Such also is the sublime mystery whereby the Church is wedded to Christ, and is both spouse and sister to the Lord.¹⁴¹

It was a happy and characteristically Christian idea, to express the wish that Jesus and his Mother should be present at the bridal feast, as they were at Cana, where Jesus changed water into wine (ll. 151-53), and well calculated to turn to higher things the thoughts of all who participated in a nuptial feast, which was only too apt to be an occasion of conserving pagan customs.

Mary is called here the temple that God reared for Himself (l. 155-56), an expression that St. Ambrose had already used.¹⁴² The comparison: "descendens.....velut imber.....super vellus," recalls the Antiphon in the Lauds of the Feast of the Circumcision: "Sicut pluvia in vellus descendisti." These lines (155-58)

Namque Deus placitum sacrata in Virgine templum
Ipse sibi arcano condidit impluvio,
Descendens tacito adlapsu, velut imber ab alta
Nube super vellus rore silente cadit ¹⁴³

are among the most beautiful that the early poets have written concerning the Mother of the Savior. The exclamation:

O novo ad humanam Domini commenta salutem!

gives the passage a lyric turn, as well as a Scriptural setting. One is reminded of other exclamations evoked by the same thought; for example, that of St. Paul, who, after speaking of the calling of the Gentiles and the ultimate salvation of Israel, cries out: "O altitudo divitiarum sapientiae et scientiae Dei!"¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Lines 153-168. Corp. Vindob. 30, p. 243. P. L. 61, 636-37.

¹⁴² Cf. above p. 37.

¹⁴³ Cf. Judges, VI, 37-40.

¹⁴⁴ Rom. XI, 33.

or again that of Sedulius, when his spirit was fired by the contemplation of God made man:

"O facilis pietas! ne nos servile teneret
Peccato dominante jugum, servilia summus
Membra tulit Dominus."¹⁴⁵

or, finally, that of the Exsultet: "O mira pietatis dignatio! ut servum redimeres, Filium tradidisti."

It is remarkable, in a way, that Paulinus in all his voluminous poetical work should have so little to say of the Blessed Virgin Mary, pious Christian and zealous bishop as he was; and even what he did write was subordinate to other subjects. But it must be remembered that he lived at a time when the Church in the West, while not greatly afflicted with Arianism, had to bend all her energies towards Christianizing the half-pagan converts who had flocked to her when the Emperors became Christian, and later had to struggle for her existence when the barbarians invaded the Empire, with the consequence that Christian piety was scarce given an opportunity for normal development. Moreover, he died in the year in which the Council of Ephesus was held,¹⁴⁶ that is, at the time when the devotion to the Mother of God was just receiving its greatest impulse in the early middle ages. Finally, it must be added, his attention was engrossed almost completely by his fervent devotedness to the cult of his favorite Saint, Felix of Nola.¹⁴⁷ He had chosen him as his patron early in his career, perhaps at his baptism; to his tomb he betook himself after his conversion to live retired from the world; in his honor he built a magnificent basilica;¹⁴⁸ in his praise he almost yearly wrote a lengthy poem after settling at Nola.¹⁴⁹ His devotion to St.

¹⁴⁵ Carm. Pasch. II, 54-56.

¹⁴⁶ A. D. 431.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Livius, op. cit., p. 308 sqq.

¹⁴⁸ He describes it in a letter to Sulpicius Severus. Epist. XXXII. P. L. 61, 330 sqq. Corp. Vindob. 29, p. 275 sqq.

¹⁴⁹ For analysis of these Carmina natalitia (13 have been preserved entire, 1 in fragmentary form), cf. Schanz, op. cit., p. 243 sq.; Manitius (very extensive analysis) op. cit., p. 273 sqq.; Ebert, op. cit., I, p. 302. Text in Corp. Vindob. 30, XII-XVI, XVIII-XXI, XXIII, XXVI-XXIX. P. L. 61, 462 sqq. (the poems are numbered here).

Felix assumed perhaps even a too exclusive place in his life.¹⁵⁰ This makes of him a most authentic witness of the devotion of the faithful in the early ages to local Saints;¹⁵¹ but it explains also the absence of poems from his pen, in honor of Mary.

150 "According to St. Augustine he.....had an exaggerated idea concerning the veneration of saints and relics." (Cath. Encycl., vol. XI, p. 585b, art. St. Paulinus of Nola, last paragr.)

151 Cf. Livius, l. cit., and p. 287; see also Neubert, op. cit., p. 255 sq. and note p. 256.

CHAPTER IX

To St. Hilary of Arles has been attributed a brief poetical work, entitled *de Evangelio*,¹⁵² which relates, in 114 hexameter lines, the chief events of the life of Christ. The Nativity is spoken of as follows (ll. 1-5, 24-32):¹⁵³

- 1 Christus hic flos decor est fonsque perennis.¹⁵⁴
 Hunc postquam verbo conceptum numinis alti
 Plena Deo Virgo utero est enixa pudico
 Effulsitque novus terris gaudentibus infans
 5 Protinus implevit totum lux clarior orbem.
 * * * * *
- Salve, vera Dei proles, puer aethere missus,
 25 Non commune genus nec moribus edite nostris;
 Innuptae matris pignus¹⁵⁵ uterique pudici
 Partus, et intactae mirandus virginis infans.
 Quamvis illa pio jactet se nomine matrem,
 Fingentis quendam ventris imitata tumorem,
 30 Ostentetque tuas cunas risuque salutet,

¹⁵² This is only a very probable conjecture. The author's name was Hilarius. Stylistic reasons forbid to attribute the work to St. Hilary of Poitiers. The only other possible author seems to be the bishop of Arles. That he wrote poetry is certain from what appears to be an undoubtedly authentic fragment that has been preserved (on the Spring of St. Bartholomew at Grenoble) (Cf. Manitius, *op. cit.*, p. 188 sq.). From his pen we have, as is now generally believed, (cf. Manitius, p. 189) the versification of Genesis (*metrum in Genesim*) from the Creation to Noah's leaving the Ark. The style and manner of treatment of this work and of the *de Evangelio* are so much alike that the two compositions must be attributed to the same author. Cf. Corp. Vindob. 23, XXVIII-XXIX.

¹⁵³ Text in Corp. Vindob. 23, p. 270-71, ed. by Peiper.

¹⁵⁴ This line has been thus metrically emended by Peiper (l. cit.):
 Christus hic flos (est) decor (hic) est fonsque perennis.

¹⁵⁵ With the early Christian writers, *pignus* regularly signified child. See Forcellini, and Du Cange, s. v. (Note here the lengthening of final—us at the caesura. For a similar reason there is no elision after Virgo, l. 3).

Virgo tamen mater et magni conjugis expers,
Ignorat causam sobolis,¹⁵⁶ sed gaudia novit.

"Christ is our flower, our glory, our ever-flowing fountain. When the Virgin, replete with God, had conceived Him by the word of Divine power, and brought Him forth in undefiled virginity, and when the newborn Child appeared resplendent to the rejoicing earth, a more brilliant light forthwith filled the whole world.....Hail, true Son of God, Child sent from on high! not of ordinary descent, nor born into the world as we are. Offspring of unwedded mother, fruit of a chaste womb; wondrous Infant of Virgin undefiled. Though she rejoice to call herself by the sweet name of mother, apparently the law of pregnancy observing; though she point to Thy cradle and smile Thee a greeting: yet is she virgin-mother, without consort, knowing not whence is her offspring, but knowing well the joy He brings."

These lines need little comment. Hilary was a true poet; there is color and movement in his verse, and even a certain lyric element. The phraseology is clearly Virgilian; but skillfully adapted by the poet, who was not lacking in originality. Through the pleasing lines (4-5)

Effulsitque novus terris gaudentibus infans
Protinus implevit totum lux clarior orbem

it is easy to read Virgil's (Aen. IX, 731, and 110)

Continuo nova lux oculis effulsit.....

Line 25: Non commune genus nec moribus edite nostris,
is an echo of Virgil's (Ecl. VIII, 45)

Nec generis nostri puerum, nec sanguinis edit,

and the "risuque salutet" of line 30 is adapted from Virgil's charming line (Ecl. IV, 60)

Incipe, parve puer, risu cognoscere matrem.

And, finally, line 24 the poet has practically borrowed from

¹⁵⁶ Ignorat causam sobolis, is probably to be understood as a variation of the words in St. Luke, I, 34: Quomodo fiet istud quoniam virum non cognosco?

him; for we read in Aen. VIII, 301: "Salve, vera Jovis proles;" and in Aen. IV, 574: "Deus aethere missus ab alto."

The epithets he applies to the Mother of the Savior have been met with previously: "innupta mater" (l. 26), and "intacta virgo" (l. 27). "Virgo plena Deo" (l. 3), is a variation of "gratia plena" (Luke I, 28). However, the poet can lay claim to lines 28-32, which are his own invention, even if the terms be borrowed in part. His predecessors had all asserted that Mary had ever remained a Virgin; Hilary adds that such she was indeed, though, in a certain way, appearances were against it: she glories in the name of mother, she had been pregnant, she points to the cradle of her Child and greets Him with the smile that only a mother knows, and she feels all the joys of motherhood. The last lines (31-32):

Virgo tamen mater.....

Ignorat causam sobolis, sed gaudia novit

link him to Sedulius, who speaks of Mary with greater preciseness of expression, as

Gaudia matris habens, cum virginitatis honore.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Carm. Pasch. II, 67.

CHAPTER X

Some of the finest lines ever written in praise of the Mother of God are from the pen of the poet Sedulius.¹⁵⁸ He flourished in the reign of Theodosius the Younger, and Valentinian III.¹⁵⁹ His great work is the *Carmen Paschale*, in which the chief events of the life of Christ are told. This had been the theme of Juvenecus; but the object of Sedulius was the glorification of Christ in a general manner, by the narrative of the wonders He worked in the world, both under the Old and the New Law, and therefore he had a freer hand in dealing with his subject than had the earlier poet.

In the beginning of the second book, he speaks of original sin, and deplores the fault of Eve led astray by the serpent (ll. 6-8):¹⁶⁰

Heu, noxia conjux!
Noxia tu conjux magis an draco perfidus ille?
Perfidus ille draco, sed tu quoque noxia conjux.

Ah, baneful wife! Which the more baneful was?

¹⁵⁸ He seems to have been a native of Italy, and even of Rome; was versed in classic literature and wrote poetry himself. At a certain time in his life he began to regret having used his God-given talent in the service of the vanities of worldly studies and determined to devote it to better use. After having entered the clerical state, he wrote the *Carmen Paschale* with that intention, and also for the purpose of encouraging the conversion of the pagans. He chose to write in poetic form, to make his work more acceptable to many who preferred to read verse rather than prose (cf. his dedicatory letter to Macedonius). Though he was the most celebrated among the earlier Christian Latin poets, the story of his life was never written, and the above information is all that the historians have been able to gather from his own works and from contemporary and later writers. (Cf. Huemer's standard work: *De Sedulli poetæ vita et scriptis commentatio*, Vienna, 1878; reviewed at considerable length by Boissier, in the *Journal des Savants*, Paris, Sept. 1881, p. 553 sqq. Cf. also Manitius, *op. cit.*, 330 sq., Lejay in *Cath. Encycl.*, vol. XIII, 680a, etc.)

¹⁵⁹ Manitius, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

¹⁶⁰ Text in *Corp. Vindob.* 10, p. 44. P. L. 19, 593.

Is't thou, O wife, or that perfidious snake?
The snake's perfidious: thou, too, baneful wife.¹⁶¹

With sin came death upon the whole human race. But the Creator, who is "prompt to forgive, but slow to punish guilt",¹⁶² took pity on the work of His hands, and planned the reparation in such wise,

That whence transgression gave them death, from thence
Filial obedience might salvation give. (ll. 26-27)

Hence from among the children of Eve came Mary, who was to repair Eve's fault, by becoming the Mother of the Redeemer (ll. 28-31; 35-53; 63-69).¹⁶³

- 28 Et velut e spinis mollis rosa surgit acutis
Nil quod laedat habens matremque obscurat honore:
30 Sic Evae de stirpe sacra veniente Mariae
Virginis antiquae facinus nova Virgo piaret.
* * * * *
- 35 Haec ventura senes postquam dixere prophetae,
Angelus intactae cecinit properata Mariae:
Et dictum comitata fides, utrumque puellae
Sidereum mox implet onus, rerumque Creator
Nascendi sub lege fuit. Stupet innuba tensos
40 Virgo sinus gaudetque suum paritura parentem.
Jamque novem lapsis decimi de limine mensis
Fulgebat sacrata dies, cum Virgine feta
Promissum complevit opus: Verbum caro factum,
In nobis habitare volens. Tunc maximus Infans
45 Intemerata sui conservans viscera templi
Inlaesum vacuavit iter: pro Virgine testis
Partus adest, clausa ingrediens et clausa relinquens.
Quae nova lux mundo, quae toto gratia caelo?
Quis fuit ille nitor, Mariae cum Christus ab alvo
50 Processit splendore novo? velut ipse decoro
Sponsus ovans thalamo, forma speciosus amoena

¹⁶¹ The translation of the selections from the *Carm. Pasch.* are from Livius, *op. cit.*, p. 443 sqq. Most of these selections have been put into German hexam. verse by Lehner, *op. cit.*, p. 266 sq.

¹⁶² Cf. ll. 20-21.

¹⁶³ Text in *Corp Vindob.* 10, p. 46 sqq. P. L. 19, 595 sqq.

Prae filiis hominum, cujus radiante figura
Blandior in labiis diffusa est gratia pulchris.

* * * * *

- 63 Salve, sancta Parens, enixa puerpera regem,
Qui caelum terramque tenet per saecula, cujus
65 Numen et aeterno complectens omnia gyro
Imperium sine fine manet; quae ventre beato
Gaudia matris habens cum virginitatis honore
Nec primam similem visa es nec habere sequentem:
Sola sine exemplo placuisti femina Christo.

As rising from sharp thorns the tender rose,
With naught to harm, its mother's glory pales:
So from Eve's stock the holy Mary comes,
A Virgin new, to expiate the crime,
Which the primeval virgin wrought of old.

* * * * *

These things to come the ancient prophets told;
But now at hand the angel speeds to sing
To spotless Mary. Faith attends his word.
A heavenly burden fills the Maiden's womb:
The world's Creator to the law submits
Of being born. Meanwhile her heaving breasts
The sacred Virgin all astonished sees,
And joys now soon to give her Parent birth.
When lo, the nine months o'er, and tenth begun,
The sacred day begins to shine, whereon,
His promised work complete, the Word made Flesh,
Is of the Virgin Mother for us born.
Wishing to dwell in us, that Mighty Babe,
Guarding intact His temple's inner shrine,
Makes way unscathed—of childbirth virginal
Himself the voucher. Closed was that Orient Gate
At coming in, at going out was closed.
What new light shed on earth, what grace through heaven,
What glory shone, when Christ from Mary's womb,
As bridegroom from fair chamber, full of joy,
Went forth in splendor new, with gracious form,
Of all the sons of men most beautiful,
Radiant in countenance, upon His lips,
So passing sweet, the kindest grace diffused!

Hail holy Parent, Mother of the King,¹⁶⁴
 Who through the ages heaven and earth controls,
 Whose Deity and Empire—all that is
 Embracing in circumference etern—
 Endless remain: thou, who, of blessed womb,
 Hast mother's joys with honor virginal.
 None like is seen before nor after thee.
 O peerless Woman, sole thou pleased'st Christ.

These lines are among the best that Sedulius has written. By them he won for himself immortality among the poets and an enviable honor: the two lines 63 and 64, slightly modified, have been taken by the Church to form the Introit of the ordinary votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary.¹⁶⁵

Not all of the ideas of the above selection, however, are original with Sedulius. The line "*virginis antiquae facinus nova Virgo piaret*" (31) was already in the *Carmen adversus Marcionem* (l. 152) in but slightly different form. The expression "*innuba Virgo*" is found in the poems of Prudentius (*Apoth.* l. 571), and the "*stupet tensos Virgo sinus*" in the *Carmen de Salvatore* (l. 8-9) as also the "*paritura parentem*" (l. 40) in the form of "*auctorem paritura suum*" (l. 10). Moreover, the "*Virgo feta*" (l. 42) can be traced to Paulinus, who had spoken of Mary as "*verbo feta Dei*" (*Carm.* VI, l. 122). From Paulinus also seems to be adapted the beautiful line: "*gaudia matris habens cum virginitatis honore*" (l. 67), for he had made Elizabeth say to Mary: "*intactae ut ferres titulos, et praemia nuptae*".¹⁶⁶ There is a line similar to it also in Hilary of Arles, as has been pointed out above.¹⁶⁷ In the line: "*intemerata sui conservans viscera templi*" (l. 45), there

¹⁶⁴ Donahoe has a lengthy translation in the form of a hymn for the *Salve, sancta Parens*, op. cit., Series II, p. 47.

¹⁶⁵ The *Carm. Pasch.* is not, of course, written throughout in the lofty strain of those seven lines (63-69). But despite his weaknesses, the poet deserves better, it would seem, than to be styled merely "*le pâle, versificateur du Carmen Paschale*" as Batiffol calls him. (*Hist. du brév. romain*, Paris, 1911, p. 214). For analysis and criticism of the work of Sedulius, cf. Manitius, op. cit., p. 305 sqq., Ebert, p. 375 sqq.

¹⁶⁶ *Carm.* VI, l. 154 in the account of the Visitation, which has not been quoted here.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. p. 61.

is a reminiscence of St. Ambrose, who had said: "claustrum pudoris permanet.....versatur in templo Deus".¹⁶⁸ The poet has skilfully interwoven the words of Scripture in two places: "Verbum caro factum" (John, I, 14); "speciosus forma prae filiis hominum.....diffusa est gratia in labiis." (Ps. xlv, 3). "Sponsus ovans thalamo" (l. 51) with the "processit" in the previous line (50) is likewise Scriptural (Ps. xviii, 6) and had been used similarly by St. Ambrose (procedens e thalamo suo). Finally, from Virgil, his master in the art of verse, he imitated the expression "rosa e spinis acutis" (l. 28),¹⁶⁹ which he has, however, developed into one of the most pleasing of similes (l. 28-29). From him also he borrowed the salutation "Salve, sancta Parens", (l. 63)¹⁷⁰ and the "imperium sine fine" (l. 66),¹⁷¹ as well as the solemn expression "maximus Infans" (l. 44).¹⁷² But he can claim as his own the last lines, which tell so decisively that Mary's great privilege of virginal Divine

¹⁶⁸ In the Veni, Redemptor gentium; str. 4, 2, 4.

¹⁶⁹ Ecl. V. 39: Carduus et spinis surgit paliurus acutis.

¹⁷⁰ Aen. V, 80; Salve, sancte Parens. This form of salutation is thoroughly Virgilian. Cf. Georg. II, 173, salve, magne parens; also Aen. II, 591, alma parens (id. II, 664; X, 252).

¹⁷¹ Aen. I, 279.

¹⁷² Cf. Aen. VIII, 20, maximus ultor; VI, 192, maximus heros. Perhaps the sidereum onus (l. 38) is Virgilian as well. Cf. Aen. X, 3, sidereum in sedem; XII, 167, sidereo clypeo; III, 585-6, aethra sidera; and so is certainly the nova lux, l. 48 (cf. Aen. IX, 110, 173, imitated also by Hilary in de Evangelio, l. 5). It need not cause surprise that Sedulius and his Christian fellow-poets should have borrowed so abundantly from Virgil (and, to a lesser extent, from the other classic writers). Possibly they were too dependent on him to permit of their developing sufficiently their own powers. On the other hand, it was right and proper that what was best in the ancient classics be made subservient to the cause of Christian literature: just as the Church adopted many an ancient pagan religious custom that was suitable for Divine worship, but giving it a new meaning, making it become a means of grace and sanctification. Finally, as Boissier observes, the Christian poets' fidelity in imitating the classic writers was one of the principal causes of their success with the educated classes, who were thus made to see that the Church was not the enemy of literary culture; in this way, the poets in a certain sense continued the work of the apologists. (La Fin du Paganisme. Paris, Hachette, 1891, vol. II, p. 497. Cf. also ib. p. 498; and p. 55, appreciation of the value of the work of Juvenius from this point of view.)

maternity is indeed unique, unshared by anyone (ll. 68-69):

Nec primam similem visa es nec habere sequentem:
Sola sine exmplo placuisti femina Christo.

Perhaps Sedulius is thus made to appear, at least in this passage, in the light of a skilful compiler. Even so, he has displayed remarkable talent in weaving together the threads borrowed from other sources. It may be observed, however, that Sedulius, with all other ecclesiastical writers, had quite naturally to depend considerably on his predecessors; for, theological subjects, such as his was, do not lend themselves to the perfect freedom of treatment that others admit of. The safest path here for the poet, as well as for the theologian, is the path of authorized tradition. Besides, his imagery has to be drawn chiefly from Holy Scripture. Now, in the days of Sedulius neither the imagination of the poets nor the ingenuity of popular devotion had as yet found in Holy Scripture the wealth of figures and types of Mary that were discovered there by the piety of the succeeding ages. Hence the store of imagery from which he could draw was as yet comparatively limited. Finally, it must be conceded that he himself had only a moderate sum of creative talent.

The question arises here: are the lines *Salve, sancta Parens.....* to be considered as real address, or as mere rhetorical apostrophe? The question may possibly seem idle; nevertheless, it has some importance for this reason: when once it is known at what time the direct address and invocation of the Mother of God finds a place in poetical literature, a starting-point is given for judging of the date of those hymns in her honor that contain such address or invocation, or consist entirely of it; as, for instance, the *Ave, maris stella*, the *Nunc tibi, Virgo virginum*,¹⁷³ and others.

It has been pointed out in the section on the extracts from the works of Prudentius, that his strophe *Sentisne, Virgo nobilis.....* can hardly be said to be more than mere rhetorical apostrophe. Sedulius flourished some forty years after Pru-

¹⁷³ Wackernagel, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

dentius, and during that interval devotion to the Mother of God had received considerable impetus.¹⁷⁴ Yet, after Sedulius, there is hardly any mention of her in poetry till the beginning of the sixth century, and invocations addressed to her are not common even in Latin ecclesiastical prose literature before the same period.¹⁷⁵ This fact could of itself cause one to doubt that the above lines of Sedulius are to be considered as direct address. Moreover, he uses apostrophe so frequently—there are at least ten examples of it in the *Carmen Paschale* not including the lines in question nor the prayers to God and to Christ in Bk. I—that it is almost a mannerism with him. It might indeed seem nearer to the truth to say that the poet did intend to address himself directly to the Mother of God; yet, while it would have been most natural to add a word of invocation, as the later poets have done almost invariably in similar instances, Sedulius did not add such a word, and thus has left his readers in doubt as to the real motive that guided his pen when he wrote those lines.

In the *Carmen Paschale* mention is made of Mary also in three other places: Bk. I, ll. 81-84; Bk. V, ll. 322-25, and 357-64.

In the first, the poet prays that God grant him to tread the path to the pastures of eternal life:¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Livius, *op. cit.*, p. 288, note.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Livius, *ib.* The first clearly authentic example in Latin poetry of direct invocation of Mary seems to be in the hymn *Ut Virginem fetam loquar*, by Ennodius. The last line of this hymn leaves no room for doubt:

Nostri memento praepotens.

This, with the two preceding lines, is not found in P. L. 63, 332, No. XIX, of which the text in Livius, p. 452 sq. is a reprint. The last strophe of the hymn exists in mutilated form in the MSS. As emended in Corp. Vindob. (6, p. 552 sq.) it reads:

Vinculum pudoris natus est.
(Quae lau)de Christi dignior
Quam sunt superni, crederis,
Nostri memento praepotens.

G. M. Dreves (*An. Hymn. L*, p. 67) has emended the defective line thus:
(Quae se)de Christi dignior.

- 21-22. P. L. 19, 561. See text and transla-

Semita vitae

Ad caulas me ruris agat, qua servat amoenum
 Pastor ovile bonus, qua vellere praevis albo
 Virginis Agnus ovis grexque omnis candidus intrat.

Be mine to tread the path of life that leads
 To pastures green, where the Good Shepherd keeps
 In pleasantness and peace His fold secure.
 There enters first the Lamb who goes before,
 Of whitest fleece, sprung from a Virgin sheep.
 Him follow after all the shining flock.

In the second, he tells on the one hand, that the Virgin-Mother came with the other women to the sepulchre of Christ at the dawn of day:¹⁷⁷

Hoc luminis ortu

Virgo Parens aliaeque simul cum munere matres
 Messis aromaticae notum venere gementes
 Ad tumulum, vacuumque vident jam corpore factum.

The Virgin-Mother at first break of day,
 And other matrons in her company,
 Their harvest of sweet spices carrying,
 Came mourning to the well-known sepulchre;
 And see it of the Body now bereft.

And in the third he tells, further, that Christ appeared to her the first after His resurrection, that she might be His messenger to others. Here, also, Mary is said to be the type of the Church:¹⁷⁸

Discedat Synagoga, suo fuscata colore,
 Ecclesiam Christus pulchro sibi junxit amore;
 Haec est conspicuo radians in honore Mariae:
 Quae cum clarifico semper sit nomine Mater,
 Semper Virgo manet; hujus se visibus astans
 Luce palam Dominus prius obtulit, ut bona Mater,

¹⁷⁷ Corp. Vindob. 10, p. 138; P. L. 19, 739 sq. Text and translation in Livius, op. cit., p. 190.

¹⁷⁸ Corp. Vindob. 10, p. 140; P. L. 19, 742 sq. Livius, op. cit., p. 446-7. This selection seems to contradict what is stated by him p. 190-191.

*Gaudia divulgans miracula, quae fuit olim
Advenientis iter, haec sit redeuntis et index.*

Give o'er the Synagogue, its glory dimmed:
Christ to Himself in beauteous love hath joined
The Church, e'en her that in great honor shines
Conspicuous of Mary; who for aye
Mother of glorious name, yet still remains
The ever-Virgin. To her sight the Lord
At break of day new-risen first appeared:
That publishing the mighty miracle,
The same good Mother, who before had been
The way whereby He came on earth to man,
Might point the road of His return to heaven.

From Sedulius there remain yet to be quoted two distichs of the *Elegia*, and part of the hymn *A solis ortus cardine*.

The first of these works¹⁷⁹ is written in praise of Christ, and treats briefly various prophetic types of the Old Testament and their fulfillment in the New, and also contrasts the benefits of God and the ingratitude of man. In ll. 7-8 he contrasts the part of Eve and Mary in the fall of man and the redemption:

*Sola fuit mulier, patuit qua janua leto:
Et qua vita redit, sola fuit mulier.*¹⁸⁰

By woman only yawned the gate of death:
By woman only opens the gate of life.¹⁸¹

In ll. 53-54 he extols the perpetual virginity of Mary:

*Virgo Maria nitet nullo temerante pudore:
Post partum pueri virgo Maria nitet.*

A Virgin, Mary shines, inviolate:
Her childbirth o'er, a Virgin, Mary shines.

¹⁷⁹ It is in epanaleptic verse; i. e., the second part of the pentameter repeats the first part of the hexameter. See full text in P. L. 19, 753 sqq. Corp. Vindob. 10, p. 155 sqq., *Summa Aurea*, V, 723 sqq.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. *Carm. adv. Marc.*, I, c. 2: *Virgo sancta parit, patuit nova janua vitae.* (P. L., 2, 1056).

¹⁸¹ Translation of both distichs from Livius, op. cit., p. 449. The epanaleptic form is imitated in the second.

The hymn *A solis ortus cardine*¹⁸² treats briefly the chief events of the life of Christ. The first seven strophes are used by the Church in the Divine Office at Lauds from Christmas day until the Vigil of Epiphany.¹⁸³ The text and translation follow:¹⁸⁴

1. *A solis ortus cardine
Adusque terrae limitem
Christum canamus principem,
Natum Maria Virgine.*
2. *Beatus auctor saeculi
Servile corpus induit,
Ut carne carnem liberans
Non perderet quod condidit.*¹⁸⁵
3. *Clausae parentis viscera
Caelestis intrat gratia,
Venter puellae bajulat
Secreta, quae non noverat.*
4. *Domus pudici pectoris
Templum repente fit Dei,
Intacta nesciens virum
Verbo creavit filium.*
5. *Enixa est puerpera,
Quem Gabriel praedixerat,*

¹⁸² It is *abecedarian*; i. e., it consists of 23 strophes, having the initial letters in alphabetical order. For the importance of this hymn in the history of the development of ecclesiastical hymnody, cf. Ebert, *op. cit.*, p. 380 sqq., Manitius, p. 311 sq. (Kayser, p. 344-5, follows Ebert.)

¹⁸³ Daniel, *op. cit.*, I, p. 144: "Inter opera C. Sedulii legitur hymnus alphabeticus omni pietatis affectu plenissimus, quo ille Christi miraculorum nobilis praeco totam redemptoris vitam persequitur. Ab hoc dulcissimo carmine ecclesia non potuit quin sibi flosculos quosdam delibaret."

¹⁸⁴ Text from *An. Hymn. L.*, p. 58. Cf. also Daniel, I, 143; Wackernagel, I, p. 46; March, p. 59. The entire hymn may be seen in *Corp. Vindob.* 10, p. 163 sqq.; *P. L.* 19, 763 sqq.; *Summa Aurea*, V, 726 sq. It is listed as Nos. 25-31 in the *Repertorium Hymnologicum* of U. Chevalier. See German version of str. 1-6 by Lehner, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

¹⁸⁵ *P. L.* and *Summa Aurea* read: *ne perderet quos condidit.*

Quem matris alvo gestiens
Clausus Johannes senserat.

6. Feno jacere pertulit,
Praesepe non abhorruit,
Parvoque lacte pastus est,
Per quem nec ales esurit.
7. Gaudet chorus caelestium,
Et angeli canunt Deum,
Palamque fit pastoribus
Pastor creatorque omnium.¹⁸⁶

Unto the furthest bounds of earth,¹⁸⁷
E'en from the rising of the morn,
The Christ, our Prince, O let us sing,
Of Mary ever Virgin born.

So did the world's Creator blest
To bear a servile body choose,
That, by His Flesh He flesh might free,
And thus His creatures might not lose.

Then into His chaste Mother's breast
There entereth a heavenly grace,
And Holy Fruit, before unknown,
In a pure Maiden's womb finds place.

¹⁸⁶ Strophes 8, 9, 11 and 13 of this hymn are used at Vespers on Epiphany and during the Octave. The first lines have been changed from

Hostis Herodes impie
Christum venire quid times?

to

Crudelis Herodes Deum
Regem venire quid times?

¹⁸⁷ Translation by Rt. Rev. E. G. Bagshawe (Bishop of Nottingham), *op. cit.*, p. 41. J. P. Val d'Eremo, D.D., has published a very exact translation in his *Selected Feast-Day Hymns*, p. 4-5. The translation by D. J. Donahoe in *Early Christian Hymns*, p. 67, is somewhat free. Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology* (1892) p. 4, makes mention of 18 English versions. The hymn was a favorite in the early middle ages; it is found in 88 MSS. before the 11th century. (Mearns, *op. cit.*,)

The house of her most holy breast
 God's Temple now is forthwith made;
 And she who knew not man, conceived
 Her only Son without man's aid.

She beareth, when her time has come,
 Him whom St. Gabriel had foretold,
 Whom, leaping in his mother's womb,
 St. John in spirit did behold.

He deigned on humble straw to lie,
 The manger He did not refuse,
 Upon a little milk He fed,
 Whose gifts all, e'en the birds must use.

The choir of saints is filled with joy,
 Angels to God their praises sing,
 And of the Shepherd, Lord of all,
 To holy shepherds tidings bring.

This splendid hymn¹⁸⁸ is in praise of the Savior; but nearly every one of the seven strophes adopted in the liturgy sings almost as directly the glories of His Mother. Kayser has aptly summarized it:¹⁸⁹ "The first stanza forms the introduction, by an appeal to glorify the Incarnation of Christ the Lord, throughout the whole wide world. This song of praise itself then is divided into two parts: the one (str. 2-4) extols the wonderful conception (of Christ), the other (str. 5-7) the wonderful nativity. The most admirable circumstance in both is the incomprehensible self-abasement of the Son of God: He, the Creator of all things assumes the form of a slave, takes up His abode in the bosom of a Virgin. But notwithstanding His humiliation, He is wondrously glorified by the most blameless of mankind: the pure Virgin, whose chaste bosom becomes God's temple, adores Him; St. John, while yet enclosed in His mother's womb, exults in His presence. At His birth there is greater humiliation: a manger is His cradle, a hand-full of straw His resting place; but also yet greater glorification: the

¹⁸⁸ Cf. the high praise bestowed on it by Célestin Albin, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

¹⁸⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 363. See his masterly exposition of the entire hymn, p. 350 sqq. Cf. also the synopsis of it by Pimont, *op. cit.*, p. 50 sqq.

choirs of angels sing a canticle of joy, and angel-voices announce His coming."

While bearing a stamp of originality, this hymn is really a beautiful mosaic, as it were, of ideas from Scripture and from earlier poets and enriched with some of the author's own gems of thought. It is excellently suited for use at Divine service, and it was probably intended for such use.¹⁹⁰ The texts and ideas from Scripture are easily recognized. They are interwoven in every strophe, from the opening lines, which are adapted from the 112th Psalm, verse 3: "A solis ortu usque ad occasum," to the last line, where the Savior's title of Good Shepherd¹⁹¹ is suggested by the mention of the shepherds to whom the angels announced His nativity.¹⁹² From his predecessors in the domain of Christian Latin poetry he adapted the "carne carnem liberans" (str. 2. 3), which, in the *Carmen adversus Marcionem* read: "ut carnis caro debita solvat" (II, 152)¹⁹³; the "clausae parentis viscera" (str. 3. 1), which was probably suggested by the verse of St. Ambrose: "claustrum pudoris permanet";¹⁹⁴ and the expression "templum Dei" (str. 4. 2) which occurs in the *Epithalamium* of St. Paulinus (l. 155),¹⁹⁵ who had also used the epithet "intacta" in his panegyric on St. John the Baptist (l. 154.) The thought expressed in the line "verbo creavit filium" is analogous to that of the *Carmen de Salvatore*: "quem verbo inclusum" (l. 7),¹⁹⁶ and of the *Carmen de Christo*: "verbique in semina fusum" (l. 4).¹⁹⁷ Strophes 6 and 7 are based entirely on Gospel texts, but it cannot be denied that the author has expressed himself here with true poetic feeling, and that the 6th strophe in par-

¹⁹⁰ Manilius, op. cit., p. 312.

¹⁹¹ Cf. John X, 11.

¹⁹² Cf. Luke II, 8. *Carm. Pasch.* II, 70-73.

¹⁹³ Cf. above p. 8.

¹⁹⁴ Hymn *Veni, Redemptor gentium*, str. 4. 2. Cf. above p. 37.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. above, p. 56.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. above, p. 25.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. above, p. 28. Sedulius refers to the words: "Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum." The author of the *Carmen de Salvatore* apparently also; but the meaning of Merobaudes in the *Carmen de Christo* is uncertain.

ticular is characterized by genuine pathos.¹⁹⁸

If a judgment is sought, from the works of the poets, concerning the development of the devotion to the Mother of God in the fifth century, the evidence will be found not in Paulinus, but in Sedulius, and particularly in the seven lines beginning with *Salve, sancta Parens*.¹⁹⁹ Juvencus, it will be remembered, had drawn a sketch of the virtues that rendered her image attractive; Prudentius had above all admired and exalted her marvellous virginity; Paulinus inherited this trait, one might say, but though he expatiated at length on the subject there is too much rhetoric in his lines to permit his tribute from being any improvement on that of Prudentius. The poet Sedulius strikes a new note: he sings her exaltation, the grandeur of her dignity of Mother of the eternal King of heaven and earth, and of her unique privilege whereby she is both virgin and mother, so that in all ages there never had been or ever will be any one found like to her: alone she stands, the delight of Christ, without an equal. His predecessors had not been unaffected by this singular prerogative of virginal maternity: they had extolled it indeed, but chiefly as a proof that he who was born of her was God; St. Paulinus had even expressed his admiration of it in much the same terms as Sedulius himself. But it remained for the latter to throw the light of eternal glory upon it, so to speak, and to point out not only its beauty but above all its grandeur, by showing how it places her in a world apart in the eyes of Christ:

Sola sine exemplo placuisti femina Christo.

Thus the efforts of the former poets were in a manner nobly summed up, and the field was prepared, wherein the later poets could exercise their gifts without ever exhausting its possibilities.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Pimont, *op. cit.*, p. 61. Line 4: March, *op. cit.*, p. 249, refers to Luke XII, 6: "Not one of them is forgotten before God"; Kayser, *op. cit.*, p. 361, to the same text, and also to Ps. 146, 9: "Who giveth to beasts their food, and to the young ravens who call upon him."

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Pimont, *op. cit.*, p. 61. These lines were held in particular esteem in the middle ages. Cf. P. L. 19, 599, note to l. 63: *Hi septem versus caractere rubro in Cod. Urb. distincti sunt.*

CONCLUSION.

With Sedulius, this sketch of what may be called the beginnings of Marian Poetry may be appropriately closed. If the date assigned him above is correct, there is a remarkable gap—nearly half a century—between his work and that of the next poet who has written about the Mother of God. In the meantime, the devotion to her took a stronger hold on the minds and hearts of the Christian people, with the result that when her name is again met with in poetry, it is chiefly in compositions wholly devoted to her praise; such as the *Hymnus Sanctae Mariae* of Ennodius,²⁰⁰ the *Laudes Sanctae Mariae Virginis* of Venantius Fortunatus²⁰¹ and the steadily increasing number

200 Bishop of Pavia. Died 521. See text of hymn in P. L. 63, 332; Corp. Vindob. 6, 552; Summa Aurea III, 1571; An. Hymn. L, p. 67. Text and translation in Livius, op. cit., p. 452-53 (Cf. above p. 68, note 175). The tribute to Mary in the *De Consolatoria Castitatis Laude* (*Tu Mariam sequeris.....* P. L. 59, 375) by Alcimus Avitus, bishop of Vienne (d. 518?) may be anterior to the hymn of Ennodius by a few years. Cf. Ebert, op. cit., p. 394, note 4, for conjecture as to the date of that work.

201 Bishop of Poitiers. Died early in the 7th century. See text of this work in P. L. 88, 276 sqq.; Summa Aurea V, 1109 sqq. It is held unauthentic in Leo's edition of the works of Fortunatus (*Mon. Germ. Hist. IV*, Berlin, 1881, Appendix 1). But it is attributed to Fortunatus in good MSS. (cf. Teuffel, 491, 10, where, nevertheless, the authenticity is considered very questionable). Comparison with the similar work *De Virginitate*, which is wrongly interpreted by Manitius to be a panegyric of the B. V. M. (op. cit., p. 459) speaks for the authorship of Fortunatus; and the striking analogy between line 360, and *De Virginitate* 396, *De Vita Martini* II, 477; III, 526; IV, 597 and 703 seems to confirm it beyond doubt. Cf. also Ebert's remark, op. cit., p. 523, note 4. The *Quem terra, pontus, aethera* and the *Laudes Sae. Mariae* are from the pen of one and the same poet. (Cf. Ebert, ib. p. 533, note 2.) A considerable portion of the *Laudes Sae. Mariae* may be seen, with translation, in Livius, op. cit., p. 368-69 sqq.

of hymns in her honor.²⁰² Thus the work of Sedulius may be said to mark a dividing line in Marian poetry: up to his time no independent poetical work in honor of Mary seems to be extant; in the new period, which begins practically with the 6th century, such works become the rule.²⁰³

In the history of Marian poetry, the work of the early authors is not a confused collection of verses and excerpts that are merely repetitions and to some extent amplifications of one another. It has been shown, with sufficient evidence, it is believed, that nearly every one of them has left a characteristic impress on the subject he dealt with, has added a new trait to the poetical image of the Mother of God, which was thus taking on new beauty from age to age. This image, as Sedulius leaves it, is merely a sketch in comparison with what it becomes in the works of Fortunatus and his successors; but the great lines drawn by the early poets were destined to remain.

²⁰² To the productions mentioned should be reckoned the Empress Sophia's prayer to Mary, Queen of Heaven, in Bk. II, (ll. 52-69) of the *Laudes Justini* by Corippus (fl. 560 A. D.) (*Mon. Germ. Hist.* II, 2, Berlin, 1879).

²⁰³ It is possible that one or the other of the anonymous Marian "Hymns of the 5th-11th century", published in *Anal. Hymn.* LI, belongs to the 5th century; however, the rhyme and metre of these compositions are characteristic of a date later than the time of Sedulius, and many of them are undoubtedly to be ascribed to the Carolingian age.

